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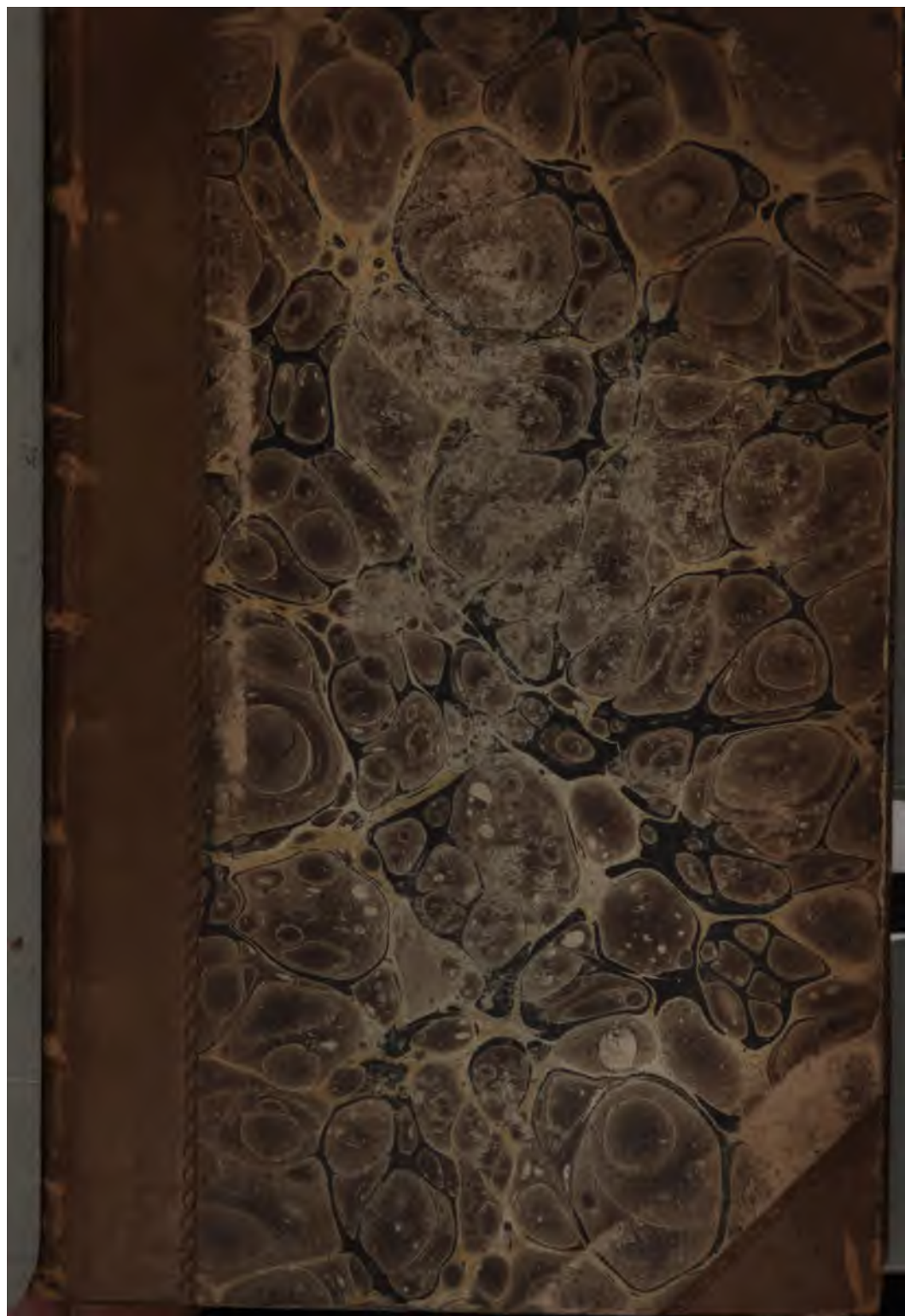
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Visits to 'The Religious World.'

**PRINTED BY L. B. SEELEY AND SONS, WESTON GREEN,
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1829.

Visits to
'The Religious World.'



"O LORD, ARE NOT THINE EYES UPON THE TRUTH?"—JER. V. 3.

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PREFACE.

"JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE THE TIME."—1 Cor. iv. 5.

As there may appear something novel in the title of the work now laid before the public, the Author of "Visits to the Religious World" is desirous that the motives which induced such a production may not be misunderstood. This opportunity is therefore taken, of stating, that it was *not* written with a view of disclosing to the world at large, the errors and failings of what are styled "professing Christians ;" though it is admitted, that their errors have been commented upon ;—it is hoped without satire, and apart from personal allusion : It was *not* written in order to furnish the light and unthinking reader with a ground for triumph over what he might term the unnecessary sanctity of persons more serious

than himself:—still less was it sent forth with the idea of being taken up as an “interesting Religious Tale.”

For what definite purpose, then, it may be asked, was this volume penned? The author requests the indulgent reader to peruse the work for himself, and to draw his own conclusions. If the human heart can in any degree be fathomed, and if there be a shadow of purity of intention in man,—these pages were written with the desire to promote the glory of the Redeemer’s kingdom on earth, and with the hope that some unprejudiced minds might receive benefit.

The error and infirmity which mingles with all our performances, will probably be readily discovered in this; should it, notwithstanding, meet with encouragement, and should any good result to the cause attempted to be advocated, the gratitude will be ascribed where it is due;—the censure must, and it is hoped, can, be endured.

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CHAPTER I.

‘USE HOSPITALITY ONE TO ANOTHER.’—1 Pet. iv. 9.

MR. CONROY, and his niece Mary, arrived late one summer's evening at the house of Mr. Harding. The two families had long been intimate; and although Mr. Conroy was by no means what is usually denominated a religious character, he was respected as a man of very upright principles; and having shown the greatest kindness and affection for his late brother's children, he had a peculiar claim on all the friends of that family. He was in the habit of making a tour, almost every summer, through various parts of England and the Continent, and was usually accompanied by one of his nephews or nieces. He was an elderly bachelor, and like most of that class, possessed many peculiarities. He was a man of consider-

able landed property, and having a generous and liberal disposition, his benevolence extended in many directions; occasionally manifesting itself where others considered it unnecessary, but never being withheld from any case of real distress. Mr. Conroy was naturally cheerful, and fond of society, although rather inclined to listen to others than to talk himself. He had been so much in the company of persons acquainted with religion, that he understood something of the subject, and had no objection to the introduction of it in conversation, although his heart was not seriously impressed with its importance. He was a close and keen observer of others, and had a mixture of humour and dry remark, which subjected him to the animadversions of those who did not understand his character; but he was a man of quick feelings, and could sympathise in the trials of others far beyond what the generality of observers would have imagined. His pride was of that singular kind which displays itself in assuming an indifference of manner and feeling when the individual is most affected. He preferred, at all times, being considered callous and uninterested, rather than easily moved by circumstances; hence, he was suspected of possessing very little real feeling. Had he been influenced

by Christian principles, he might have overcome this artificial quality, (for after all it was nothing else) which was, in truth, almost as much to be deprecated as that anxiety to appear amiable, and devoted, and full of good deeds, which some professors of religion exhibit. But by this peculiarity Mr. Conroy drew on himself the suspicion of the indiscriminating, and received his sentence at their hands, while the hypocrite, the self-deceived, and the Pharisee, not unfrequently succeeded in passing for zealous and devoted persons.

Mr. Harding received his guests with all the hospitality of a patriarch; he was a man of simple habits and unaffected manners. He apologized for the absence of Mrs. Harding, who was attending on the sick child of a cottager; and ordering tea, they entered upon the changes which had taken place since the visit of Mr. Conroy and Mary two years before. They found that the Rectory had changed its master, that the military depot stationed in the vicinity contained some officers of two regiments just returned from abroad, and that a few of the party, together with their wives, appeared likely to become agreeable additions to the religious society of Ashton.

Mary inquired how they liked the new Rector.

Mr. Harding replied, that he believed he was very generally esteemed ; he certainly was a most excellent and zealous man, eloquent in the pulpit, and active among his parishioners. " Mrs. Harding, " he added with a smile, " thinks him quite perfection, both as a clergyman and a private Christian, so I must say nothing, but if I were to give my opinion, I should say, his preaching does not exactly suit me. Nevertheless, I have the greatest respect for him, and only wish I were one-half as conscientious and self-denying."

Mrs. Harding now made her appearance, she was a very handsome woman, about six and thirty years of age, her manners were kind and agreeable, though more reserved than his. The family household assembled about ten o'clock, Mr. Harding read a chapter of the Bible, with Scott's comments, and after prayer they separated, as the travellers had had a long journey and were fatigued.

Next morning it was proposed that Mrs. Harding should take Mary with her to make some visits at the Depot, which ought to have been made before. As they drove back, Mary inquired the name of the Lieutenant Colonel's lady, " She appears a very fascinating woman, so lively, so pretty, and so unaffected."

Mrs. Harding replied, that her name was Percy, she had not been married many years, and had spent the last three abroad.

"Mr. Harding told us that she and Colonel Percy were pious people."

"I don't know enough of them to judge," said Mrs. Harding, "but I fear that the society in which they have moved has done them little good, she has very little sedateness of manner, and seems inclined to talk on any worldly subject."

"If she has lived much abroad, and without the advantages of religious society, I think great allowances should be made; she appeared to listen to all you said with seriousness and interest, perhaps she may not see it wrong to enter upon the common occurrences of life."

"Perhaps not," added Mrs. Harding, "and when we know more of her, we may think differently: we are to meet them and two other ladies of that regiment, on Tuesday at the Rectory."

Mary was pleased to have an opportunity of seeing Mrs. Percy again, for she felt interested in her, and thought there was something in her manner which indicated sincerity of feeling, although she made little demonstration. She had learnt, from the knowledge of her

own heart, to think tenderly of every one, and to withhold her opinion till time and opportunity had been afforded her of judging.

The evening arrived on which they were invited to the Rectory. The ladies carried their work-bags, as it was to be a social meeting. No one was there when they entered, so Mr. Conroy took the opportunity of inspecting the room: "What have we here in the form of a fortress? a missionary box—oh, very good." "You may as well add to its weight, Mr. Conroy," said Mrs. Harding. "I don't care if I do; one may as well help others to knowledge if one doesn't value it one's self. But what's this, another attack upon one's prodigality—ah! for the Bible Society! that's a better thing still. I suppose I must give a little more to this; I was always told there was nothing like the Bible, and so I do believe: but what puzzles me is, I find hundreds quoting it, and preaching about it, who never care to order their own conduct by its precepts, however they may their conversation."

Mrs. Harding was about to reply, when the clergyman and his lady appeared. After the introduction, Mr. Conroy took his station in a window, where he was in a measure screened from observation.

The chairs were set in a large circle round the room, and the company, as they entered, seated themselves ; Colonel and Mrs. Percy came late, apologizing for the delay on the plea of military business. Mary watched for an opportunity of taking a chair near Mrs. Percy, but there was an air of reserve and chill upon the spirits of the company which quickly infected her. She smiled at the folly of being influenced by such feelings ; but still found her resolution fail, and at last gave up the idea. The Rector's lady was a timid woman, and at a loss how to entertain strangers. Mrs. Harding addressed some conversation to Mrs. Percy, and the clergyman occasionally joined. Colonel Percy touched upon the late changes in the ministry ; no one seemed interested ; the Rector was ashamed that he knew so little of politics : they did take a newspaper, but he seldom had time for reading it ; he intended paying a little more attention to the state of affairs in future, for he thought ignorance on such subjects not quite justifiable. An elderly maiden lady present, ventured to think that politics should be avoided by all Christians, indeed she never read a newspaper, nor could she see it right to call her thoughts away from serious subjects, in order to attend to court

scandal, the vanities of the world, and the broils of government. Colonel Percy moved his chair and began examining an antique watch lying on the table. The Rector, who was a man of education and gentlemanly feelings, felt embarrassed between his desire not to give unnecessary offence to strangers unacquainted with their habits, and the fear of discouraging the self-denying principles of the lady in question. Colonel Percy, after a rather long pause, and with an air of deference for the opinions of others, imagined, that, taking the moral precepts of the Almighty in their strictest sense, there could be no objection to the perusal of events which were under his immediate control: he saw no reason why rational beings should consider it necessary to contract rather than enlarge their minds; he thought that every one should possess himself of as much information as would enlighten and cultivate his understanding without interfering with his advancement in religious knowledge. The Rector fully assented to these views, provided the heart was not too much interested in such things. Colonel Percy smiled, and feared, with much apparent sincerity, that there was danger of our becoming too interested. Mrs. Percy thought all innocent amusements lawful, and

wondered how many religious characters could strain the law beyond its limits; she thought they carved out a very narrow line, and hindered others, who felt they could not conform to their rules, from making any advances. Mrs. Harding argued, that what might be lawful might not be expedient, and it was more safe to stand on the narrow than on the broad path. Mary thought Mrs. Percy sighed, but no reply was made, and the subject dropped. Occasional remarks were made from time to time by some of the visitors, and at length the Rector took the Bible, read a chapter and made some reflections, which were concluded by prayer, and the company separated.

As soon as Mr. Conroy found himself alone with his niece, he began his observations, "What is all this, Mary? am I ever to understand you religious people? I thought to find you all of one mind, but I was more perplexed than ever this evening to see you go on as you did. Why! Mary, I never saw such a prim, formal party in all my life! does the Supreme Being require the discontinuance of all friendly, social, pleasant intercourse? If he does, then I commend you, one and all; for a more obedient set I never saw. Harding told us the first night, that Colonel Percy and his wife were of the *right*

kind; and so I retreated as one *de trop*, to make my private observations; but if they are of the number, I must say their reception was sufficiently cold, and they looked as ill at ease as ever visitors could. I cannot make you out. I was fool enough in my younger days to get myself made a freemason, but our bond of union was far more binding than yours; and when I compared the reserved manners and guarded words of your party, I could not help thinking our rules more agreeable."

Mary acknowledged that this sort of stiffness and absence of confidence were, to her, particularly annoying; she had often lamented it, especially as it had so prejudicial an effect on persons who might have been won by an open affectionate manner. "I am quite vexed," she added, "on account of the Percys, who must have felt that if they were among serious persons, at the best they could not be called agreeable." "Agreeable!" echoed her uncle, "Why no, I don't suppose such an idea entered their heads;" and he laughed at the very mention of it. Mary tried to persuade him that the sentiments and feelings of all present that evening probably were, in essentials, quite according to those principles which they professed; but by some unfortunate mixture of human infirmity, they

were not brought into that exercise which made the possession of religion lovely and desirable to others.

“Desirable and lovely! no, by no means, my dear girl, and I shall take good care how I go to one of those said social parties again. Let me know where I am!—let me find cheerful faces, a warm reception, and a free, open manner! But, dear me, what’s the intention of it all; no doubt they were all good religious people, but they will make few disciples, I am persuaded; for who would have courage to confess his unrighteous deeds to so solemn an assembly? and who that has any love for the comforts and innocent enjoyments of life, would make up his mind to adopt those monastic rigidities of deportment and manners? How is it that Harding shows none of those human infirmities, as you call them? he is pleasant enough, and will talk with a man on any rational subject without fear of endangering his soul; and yet he is what every one calls a pious man, and I am sure one who does honour to his profession; for a more unaffectedly sincere, upright, liberal-minded man does not exist. He would not have commended your proceedings this evening. But there’s his wife, as sincere and as amiable a

woman as any that breathes, full of kindness and good feeling, how can she be hampered with such heart-chilling austerities? But I see you are tired, Mary, and no doubt my criticisms on your party are not very agreeable, so good night, my dear."

Saying this, her uncle withdrew, leaving his niece, as he conjectured, by no means satisfied with his remarks. She felt that there was much of truth in them, and regretted that it should be so; at the same time she was grieved that he could not be made to understand that there was a distinction between a wilful intention of giving unnecessary offence, and the error of falling into a constrained cold manner, together with a needless scrupulosity on indifferent points. She had lamented this error in many instances, and had had occasion to observe its very prejudicial effects in numerous cases. She had seen characters, seemingly desirous of religious knowledge, and interested in the subject, although not sufficiently awakened to bear with these obstacles, turned away from their inquiries by their dread of such discipline. Her own judgment naturally led her to ask what end was answered by it; and why many of the most sincere Christians considered it necessary to lay upon themselves restraints which neither the Scriptures nor

common sense appeared to require. She was inclined to look up to other religious characters as wiser in the ways of God, and more experienced than herself, and therefore hesitated in censuring their failings, even to her own mind. Besides, she had a secret fear, from the low estimation in which she held herself, that they might possibly be better judges, than she, of what was or was not essential. This subject had given her much uneasiness, and she resolved to introduce it, the first opportunity she could find of ascertaining the opinions of sensible and experienced persons.

Meanwhile she employed some time, before retiring to rest, in asking counsel of God; beseeching Him, in all simplicity of spirit, to teach her what was according to His will, and so to enlighten her judgment, that she might not be harassed by contrary opinions, according to the notions of men.

CHAPTER II.

‘CHARITY SUFFERETH LONG, AND IS KIND ; THINKETH NO
EVIL—BEARETH ALL THINGS—BELIEVETH ALL THINGS—
HOPETH ALL THINGS.’ 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 7.

‘LOVE AS BRETHREN ; BE PITIFUL, BE COURTEOUS.’

1 Pet. iii. 8.

“How did you like your evening?” asked Mr. Harding, who had been absent the day before.

Mr. Conroy smiled, and broke his dry toast. Mr. Harding repeated the question to Mary, who was entering the breakfast room. Mary also smiled, and hesitated in her answer. “Kate,” he said, addressing his wife, “I’m afraid our excellent friends at the rectory have not made as favourable an impression on their guests as you expected.”

“Mrs. Mires, you know, my dear Harding, is rather a shy nervous woman, and there were some strangers from the depot, which perhaps might have caused a little less freedom of man-

ner ; but I always find great pleasure in their conversation."

"Yes, my love, I know you do ; but that's no reason why every one else should do the same. However, let us hear why strangers should occasion reserve and caution of manner."

"Not exactly reserve and caution ; but you must be aware that until one knows something of the character and opinions of others, it is not easy to appear quite social at first. None of us are much acquainted with the Percys, for instance, and it is difficult to introduce general conversation ; besides, one hardly can tell whether they would like the subjects which are usually brought forward among us."

"But why, my love, should any one doubt on this head ; we heard they were interested in religious conversation, and I think charity obliges us in 'hoping all things,' to act, as far as we can, upon this principle. According to my views we should receive every one who shows the slightest inclination for right knowledge as a brother or sister, as one of ourselves ; for I can't help thinking that the very desire for good is an evidence that the Lord's teaching Spirit is there. I cannot at all fall into the views of those Christians, who look upon every unknown creature as in some probability a 'vessel

of wrath.' I would rather meet every stranger under the cheering hope that he is one of the blessed family ransomed by the blood of Christ, and I would act towards him as such until I found him in darkness, and then I would desire to make him acquainted with the Saviour, in the hope that God would 'grant him repentance unto life.'"

"Yes, Harding, we ought to receive every one who we hear shows a consistency of carriage and conduct, but if we see any thing like levity of manner, we cannot suppose them serious characters, and therefore must use caution in countenancing what we consider to be wrong; it certainly is our duty to discourage all that frustrates the growth of inward holiness, and if we have reason to suspect any one of a fondness for the world, and an attachment to its vanities, we should avoid intimacy, and make it evident that we disapprove of their conduct."

"Well, my dear, you must have it your own way; but I can never assent either to the expediency or charity of such views. I would rather make allowances, knowing the deceitfulness of the human heart, for the temptations which prevail over my brethren; and I would do all in my power to win them to the side of religion, by showing them its loveliness."

“But must we not examine how far a conformity to their ways may be found advantageous to our own minds? which after all, should be the first consideration of a Christian.”

“True, my dear, but I never thought of conformity to their ways; who that loves his master would desire another service! On the contrary, I would, as I said before, show them the beauty, the loveliness of real piety. I would constrain them by the kindness, the affection, the interest of my manner, to admire, if they would not follow, the principles of a disciple of Christ. But I would never be found occupying their ground; oh no, it should be an invitation to them to join our company; my heart, my house, should be open to them as long as they desired to abide there; but it should be on my conditions, namely, that they should be content to put up with such entertainment, temporal and spiritual, as my views of Christian conduct prescribed.”

Mrs. Harding thought her husband's views too unlimited, and feared the adoption of them would prove dangerous to many weak Christians.

“To weak Christians!” he replied, “yes, my love, but I wish to see strong ones; and it is my opinion, that while they allow their sentiments to become so contracted, and their hearts to

harbour such suspicious thoughts of their less informed brethren, there will never be any thing but weak Christians. We are commanded to love one another; our Lord does not say, love those only who are deeply influenced by divine truths, and who manifest a spirit of sobriety, watchfulness, and seriousness; but he says, love them all; love those who are tried and tempted by the common enemy, love those even who are overcome of him, and by that very affection, strive to draw them away from the love of unlawful pleasures."

"I quite agree with you about Christian charity and affection, Harding, but I must think we should make a difference between loving all men, as Christ commanded, and choosing them indiscriminately as our companions. I cannot see it right or consistent to mingle with the world."

"No, nor I, we were not alluding to an intimacy with the world, but to a kind and open reception of persons who voluntarily seek our society, aware of what our principles are. Our Lord rejected none who approached Him; even those who followed Him from curiosity were suffered to draw near with the rest."

"Yes, Harding, but our Saviour could be injured by no contaminating evil."

"Certainly He could not ; but have we not security from danger by the very principle upon which we act ? We 'use hospitality,' remembering that 'in entertaining strangers, some have entertained angels unawares.'

Mrs. Harding made no further reply, and Mr. Harding compelled Mary to give an account of the evening's proceedings. "Indeed, my dear friends," he added, "I don't think any of you, (my good little judicious wife excepted) can have formed a very favourable opinion of the state of society among us ; as for the poor Percy's, just returned from a place where all was life, and variety, and intellectual conversation, I pity them."

"Amen !" said Mr. Conroy, with a very solemn air.

"We must invite them to dine with us some day, my love," said Mr. Harding.

Mrs. Harding let fall a hesitating, "Yes," and left the room, to attend to some person who wished to see her.

"You like the Percy's, Mary ?"

Mary told Mr. Harding that she had no opportunity of judging, but that they appeared very amiable people, and she wished much to see more of them. "I longed to have some conversation with her," she added, "but there was

a kind of spell over me, that I felt it impossible to speak or move."

"Alas! alas! my dear girl, we human creatures are strange beings, and because we have not difficulties enough, we weave around our feet useless webs, imagining that in imposing unnecessary restraints on our manners and words, we render ourselves more replete with humility, and more acceptable to the Divine Being. I am persuaded that if Christians would leave off some of their external mortifications, religion would assume a less gloomy and consequently a less uninviting appearance. The wavering, the timid, and the light in spirit, are discouraged by the appalling, rigid, and austere view in which religion is presented to them by these unwise professors. I have myself heard many persons assert, that they had been kept back from making any advances by the sacrifices which they were told it was necessary to make, before they could hope to be received into the favour of God. I know that some minds are by nature capable of these exertions without any aid of divine light; we see the heathen nations perpetually sacrificing their ease of body and their comforts to propitiate their idols. But there are others utterly incapable, without God's assistance, of making any such exertions. The

very mention of such rigid and apparently useless self-denial, is sufficient to fill them with disgust, or hopelessness. I have seen these results times unnumbered, and lamented it deeply ; but what can you do ? There's no convincing others of their prejudices ; there's no persuading them to contemplate the lovely, cheerful, rejoicing view of a salvation offered to the sinner ' without money and without price.' No ! the tempted being, so inert, so powerless, must find strength to renounce his heart-cleavings ; he must have power to put away all his sins ; he must have resolution to undergo every species of trial, and then he may go to Christ. But when he is there he must shun all his former associates ; he must wear the solemn deportment of his new companions ; he must preserve a rigid self-denying manner ; he must fall into the external peculiarities prescribed to him, or become liable to be censured or rejected as *inconsistent, worldly-minded, fallen from grace*. I have observed persons conforming with all scrupulosity to these regulations, who showed nothing of that spirit of love and charity which is above all outward observance ; there was the ' tithing of the mint, anise, and cummin' while weightier matters of judgment were passed aside. These persons

were well received by those whom it was their principal aim to imitate, who seeing the outward demeanour *consistent* as they term it, concluded (perhaps charitably enough) that nothing was wanting ; while the heart was dead and barren in the service of Christ, and the old man showing his corrupt head, because the Lord of Life was not appealed to for its subjugation, nor his strength relied on for victory. God forbid, that in mentioning such cases, I should indulge in any thing like want of brotherly love. I merely bring forward these instances to prove the pernicious effects of a system so widely diffused among the religious world, and so injurious in its consequences. I know many persons so influenced by the example of others, that though secretly condemning, and in heart revolting from the bondage, they are nevertheless so held in subjection, that they have neither the courage nor the ability to avow their opinions, nor to free themselves from the galling yoke. They complain that they are made to act as hypocrites ; that they are constrained to assume an unnatural manner, wholly repulsive to their feelings."

Mr. Conroy interrupted Mr. Harding by inquiring what necessity was laid upon the consciences of persons to assume a character

not natural to them ? and why any one loving truth and uprightness should think deception or acting a part justifiable ?

Mr. Harding explained, that "partly from timidity, partly from distrust of their own judgments, persons were often led to adopt a hesitating or weak line of conduct ; they could form a clear opinion of what was lacking in the views of others, but had neither the resolution nor the boldness to think and act independently for themselves ; they waited for some one to lead the way, or they submitted to their bondage under the depressing idea that perhaps such discipline was good for them. Hence," he added, "that deadness of spirit, that want of filial confidence, that slavery of fear, with which an adopted child of heaven has nothing to do."

Mary listened to this conversation with deep interest ; it was quite what she had wished to hear. The opinions Mr. Harding avowed were altogether in unison with her own feelings, but (as we have said before) from want of self-confidence, and a dread of presumption in adopting and owning to sentiments at variance with those of many experienced Christians, she had been withheld from publicly avowing them.

Mr. Conroy sat watching the countenance of his niece, while she listened to the discussion ; at

length, he said, " Mr. Harding, there sits a convert to your opinions, in the person of my niece ! I have quietly been observing her uneasy state of mind for some days past. She has not enough of the littleness of feeling which can contract itself into one narrow circle. She finds it will not do, and she is at this present moment quite ready to assume a very bold look—work herself up into a most determined spirit—avow her opinions, and defy the whole set of mortificationists."

Mary felt annoyed at her uncle's ludicrous way of speaking, but she had no hesitation in confessing that his summary of her thoughts was not altogether an erroneous one.

The conversation terminated here, for Mr. Harding had business to attend to with his steward. Mr. Conroy and Mary proposed ordering the horses about twelve o'clock. They could purchase the books they wanted to send into Devon, and might be able to find out where old Sally Nash resided, the sister of a poor woman living in the same village with Mary's family.

CHAPTER III.

‘ NOW THANKS BE UNTO GOD, WHICH ALWAYS CAUSETH US
TO TRIUMPH IN CHRIST.’—2 Cor. ii. 14.

THE morning was a fine one, the clouds were moving on in every beauty of form, and moderating the sun’s heat, which at that season is so powerful. Mary having received a summons for an inviting excursion, mounted her horse with a light heart. She felt cheered and invigorated by Mr. Harding’s conversation. She had carried her doubts, her fears, her sorrows, to the throne of grace. She had pleaded in the name of Him who cleanseth from all sin. She had endeavoured to go to her heavenly Father under a sense of filial gratitude. She desired to lay all her infirmities, trials, temptations, before Him, trusting to His arm to remove them from her. She had been dwelling on her own helplessness, worthlessness, emptiness ; and as her

own heart's destitution was discovered to her ; the fulness, the glory, the power, the majesty, the superabounding love of Christ to helpless, fallen sinners, became the more manifested to her soul. Grateful beyond all expression for the view which by faith she was enabled to take of the Saviour's full and finished salvation, she prayed earnestly that she might be brought into nearer communion with Him, 'whom to know is life eternal.' She prayed that her understanding might be enlightened by His Spirit, that she might shun that which was evil, and cleave to that which was good. She besought her heavenly Father to give her the happy rejoicing freedom of a child, not the distressing slavish spirit of bondage, but the animating joyous feeling of adoption, promised by Jehovah himself. Full of consolation and hope, and experiencing something of the power of that truth, which when known makes you free indeed, (John viii. 32.) Mary felt more than usually assured of God's guiding, protecting, preserving care. She felt relieved of an anxiety which had more or less weighed on her mind some days past. This anxiety arose from a deep sense of inward incapability of any one good thought, feeling, desire, or endeavour. She had compared herself with others, and been crushed

to the dust by the conviction that they appeared more devoted to God, more attached to his service, more self-denying, more active. She began now to perceive that strength was not in man, and that Christ being 'made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,' would perfect in her that which was lacking, working in her 'to will and to do of His good pleasure.' Enabled by faith to receive these encouraging truths, Mary's heart overflowed with peace and consolation. Every thing in nature looked bright and gay, her uncle seemed to be more interested in her remarks on religious subjects, the cottagers appeared cheerful and happy as she passed, all partook of the sunny light which shone on her own heart.

Old Sally Nash was found without difficulty, and dismounting from her horse, Mary entered the cottage. The old woman received her with great civility, apologizing that her lameness prevented her from placing a chair quickly enough. Mary explained who she was, and for what purpose she had called. Sally was delighted to have a person in her house, who had seen her sister. She asked after her health again and again. "Fanny," she said, "was always of a delicate constitution, and apt to be sad and downhearted; we did very well together, for I

was a thoughtless lively girl, ready for all kinds of frolic, and she used to tell me such ways would'nt do. Oh, says I, Fanny, I've time enough before me to grow serious. Time enough ! she would say, Sally, how can you tell what time you may have ; you may die tomorrow. I used to hear her talk, and take my own ways ; but God remembered me for good, and sent messenger after messenger till He brought me home to Christ."

"Have you no children living near you, to do any thing for you ? " asked Mary.

"Children ! my dear young lady ! the Lord gave me seven ; and because I would put them between me and Him, and content myself with my earthly joys, He sent his messengers one by one, and took them all away. I thought when the youngest went, and its father a few weeks after it, I should never hold up my head again. But, my dear lady, we don't know what we can bear till the Lord tries us, and we never know what His love is, till we have nothing else left to look to."

Mary asked if she had received immediate consolation after her trials, and in what way she had been led to find her happiness in religion.

"I was long, my dear young lady, before I cared to listen to any one. I had no wish to

read my Bible, and when I did, I found no comfort in it for me ; but ‘ the accepted time ’ came, and my ‘ day of salvation.’ I had a fall from a loft and broke my leg ; I was long confined to my bed, and then I was obliged to read to beguile the time. Fanny’s words came to my mind ; I knew I could not save myself, but she had told me I must go to Christ with repentance, putting away evil thoughts and wishes, and I must love him and give up every thing for Him. I wished to be saved, and tried to feel great repentance, but my wicked heart would only tell me I had been hardly dealt by. I thought God a severe judge—I could not love Him—I was afraid of Him—I hadn’t even the power to repent of these sinful thoughts ; I durst not pray to Him, because I knew I did not love Him. She had told me I must give up every thing for Him. I thought I had nothing left to give ; God had taken all my comforts away—what could I offer him ? Something seemed to say, my heart—but it was too hard, and I found I could not make it soft. Oh, my dear lady, I was in a bad way ; but this didn’t last long ; my neighbours used to try and help me ; they told me to pray ; I found this so difficult with my wicked heart, that I thought I should only offend God ; but one night I took up my Bible to see if I could

find any words to make a prayer from. The part of Scripture that I opened was Solomon's prayer for the people; and when I came to that verse (1 Kings viii. 38.) where Solomon speaks of every man knowing 'the plague of his own heart,' and calling upon God for forgiveness, I thought to myself, may be the Lord would hear me, for my heart plagued me sore enough. I tried to pray, and blessed be God, He heard me, sinful as I was, and took me just as I was, for I could find no way of making myself better. I was encouraged to look to Christ for pardon, and that question came into my mind, 'What shall we do that we may work the works of God?' our Lord said to them, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.' Ah, my dear lady, He knew it was harder for a poor sinful soul to believe than to work. We can all try and work, and think something of our foolish doings, but who can believe, except it be given him? As our Lord says, 'No man can come unto me, except the Father draw him;' and well do I know this, for I should never have been saved unless He had drawn me."

"What proof have you of being saved?" asked Mr. Conroy, who had stood listening to the old woman's history.

"What proof! O, bless ye, Sir, I have God's

own word and promise for it, and what security is equal to that? Jesus says, 'Whosoever believeth on me shall never perish, but *shall* have everlasting life,'—there is no doubt here—I believe on Him! I fear Him, and I wish to love Him! and who shall pluck a sinner out of His hands? He says, no man shall have power to do that—well then havn't I a right to say I am saved?"

"Can you give any evidence, my good woman, of your faith?"

"Indeed, Sir, if you come to that, I don't know what I can say; my heart is altogether bad, without one corner in order, and my sins often trouble me enough, but, bless the Lord! they don't come so bad, but what I can see my Saviour casting them behind his back. I never had such a question as the gentleman's put to me before: my dear young lady, can't you tell me what to say? I know I don't do any thing right, but then, the Lord knows our weakness, and looks to Christ for all; I think too, (she added, brightening up) I may say, I love all the Lord's people, isn't this a sign of his teaching? 'We know,' says St. John, 'that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.'"

"But do you love all men without making a

selection? for it is easy enough to love our own particular set."

"Well! good gentleman, I think I may say I do, for I think enough about their dear souls. I'm as happy as can be, when I meet a stranger who will talk about our Lord; and it frets me sadly, to find a poor blind soul who doesn't know any thing about salvation, and doesn't care to hear."

"You were at your dinner, I am afraid we have interrupted you."

"Dear no, Sir, no interruption, I'm always glad to see any one who will take the trouble to come and see me."

Mr. Conroy had cast his eyes on the table, and discovered some tea, as pale as water; before her stood a small loaf of stale bread, some very brown sugar, and a dry piece of cheese. "Have you no meat for your dinner?"

"Meat! have'nt I good bread and cheese, and plenty of it, with the comfort of a cup of tea? many a better woman than I goes without these blessings, I can assure you, Sir."

"Do you take no milk in your tea, and no butter?"

"Bless ye, Sir, I'm just as well without as with them; when I had meat, and butter and milk, and all those pampering things, I had no heart

given me to bless the Giver ; and now, praised be his holy name, I can eat my meal with gladness of heart, and thank Him for his sweet bounty to me."

"Is that your bed?" She replied that it was. "Have you only one room?"

"One is quite enough. I try to keep it clean and well aired ; I always keep the door open, except in very cold weather, for I always loved plenty of fresh air."

Mary rose to inspect the bedding, and told her she wanted a new pair of sheets, for they were mended all over, though remarkably clean.

"Well now, lady, I have saved up half-a-crown towards them, and the old ones will last quite well till I get enough money."

"How much have you to live upon?"

"Three and sixpence a week, Sir, besides a few pence I make by my pincushions. I'm very well off, and need ask no one for help, bless the Lord, I have all things abundantly."

"Are you never lonely, sitting here all by yourself so many hours?"

"Oh! no, dear lady, sometimes the day is hardly long enough to thank the Lord for all his goodness to me ; I call to mind my younger

days, and my forgetfulness of Him. I think how little I thought of Him, when my poor children were alive, and how gracious it was of Him to take them away from a sinful ignorant mother, who never cared about their poor souls. They all died young, before they could well know good from evil, and I trust their little souls are among that number that no man could tell, in the seventh chapter of Revelations. When I think of their happy lot, and who it was that took them, I can't but bless His name. Who was I that He should show mercy to the like of me ! leading me out of darkness into His marvellous light !—aye ! marvellous indeed, dear lady, I often don't know which to do, to sing or to cry. Sometimes when my mind runs upon my poor husband, I am filled with doubts and fears ; but I am told by a pious neighbour, who used to come and read and talk to him in his illness, that he appeared very low about his sins, and used to get his friend to pray for him ; I was too much taken up with my troubles to attend much to any thing. But our God is a very gracious God, and I am always angry with myself when any thought comes across me, to make me doubt of his love and mercy ; besides, you know, lady, He is a

Sovereign, and must 'do what seemeth him good,' and good and righteous indeed are all His ways !”

“Have you many books to read ?”

“Yes, dear lady, I have plenty of books, but I keep to God's word ; that's the book for finding every thing in, there's always something new, and always some sweet words to keep the mind at ease. A lady lent me a book, I forget the name of it, but it was about holy living ; a neighbour and I used to read it together, but somehow it didn't altogether please me, (perhaps that was my own fault) it spoke a great deal about pleasing God by our holy thoughts and desires, and said a deal about what man was to do to get the favour of God ; I wanted to hear something about my blessed Saviour, that's what always stirs me up, and makes me try to glorify His precious name, by thinking of Him, and talking of Him, and loving all His people. But I found it wouldn't do for me to look for any thing good in my heart ; so says I, one day, after we had been reading the matter of fifty pages without any thing of Christ, Susan, says I, do you like that book. Why ? Yes, Sally, says she, I think I do, but I like the Bible better. Ah, says I, and so do I ; and I told her I thought it just like as if any one

should pour out a glass of wine and put it into a jug of water, it might be very good drink, but the strength and nourishment of it was gone, so says I, it is with that book ; upon which we took to our Bible again, and indeed we never wanted to try any thing else."

Sally Nash made further inquiries about her sister, and Mary answered her fully, for she had very lately seen her. " Ah, my poor dear sister ! what would I give to see her ? but we shall meet in heaven, for we look to the same Saviour, only she has weak spirits, and used to be very fearful about her salvation ; sometimes I was ready enough to tell her, if religion only made people gloomy and unhappy, I couldn't see the value of it. She would say that religion made her happy, because she hoped to be saved hereafter ; but that her sins and her failures in duty to God distressed and often made her miserable. I could understand little of all this, it only seemed to me a hard service, and spoilt all the innocent enjoyments of life, (as I used to call them) without giving you any real happiness : she talked about happiness, but then, I saw that for once she looked cheerful and rejoicing, she would cry a dozen times."

Mary could not comfort the sister by assurances, that it was otherwise now, she said she

had had frequent conversations with her upon the subject of Christian privilege, but that it was not in her power to make her look away from herself to that 'blood which cleanseth from *all sin*.' "Oh dear! oh dear!" exclaimed Sally Nash, "What would become of me (a wicked ignorant slave to sin and evil) if I was to keep looking at myself and not to Christ! why! I should never have a moment's peace, I should lose my senses! dear heart alive! what can my poor sister mean!" Mary told the old woman that many of God's children who had been taken into His service for years, and lived in great fear of sin, and love of holiness, had nevertheless gone down to their graves in bondage, endeavouring to put a yoke upon their necks, which, as Peter says, in Acts xv. 10, 'neither our fathers, nor we, were able to bear.' The old woman looked amazed, she took her Bible and began turning over its pages—"Why," said she, "there's nothing here but comfort, the promises are all in Christ Jesus, and all for those who believe in Him! What is it they want—won't Christ himself satisfy them? What do they want to find in themselves? Oh dear! oh dear! if they had had as much of their own selves as I have had, they would be glad to let that alone for ever,

and take up with the Lord Christ, as the great and mighty Saviour. I'm sure I should have been in my coffin long ago, with fretting over my sins and all my troubles, if the Lord's Spirit hadn't been sent into my heart to teach me to look unto Jesus and no where else."

Mr Conroy asked her to explain what she understood by looking unto Jesus.

"Why, Sir, I take it in the same way as Moses told the Israelites, to look at the brazen serpent when they were bitten by the fiery ones. I was reading that only a day or two ago, and I thought it beautiful."

"What do you mean was beautiful?"

"I mean, Sir, that the figure of it (as they call it) was beautiful; I could fancy the poor dying creatures lying all along the ground, and Moses lifting up the serpent, and telling them to look and be healed. I observed, he didn't even ask them to move or to get up and look; he didn't say kneel down and worship it, but he bid them look just as they were, and be made whole; no doubt, they had faith given them to believe, for every one when he beheld the serpent of brass, lived. So, Sir, I take it, it is with every sin-afflicted soul, he has only to look to the Saviour, who was lifted upon the cross, and he is made whole, and lives—ah !

‘lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him,’ as the apostle says (Gal. ii. 20).”

“Do you never feel unhappy about your sins, my good woman ? ”

“Oh, dear, that I do, Sir, my very heart melts again, to think how dead and cold I am, when I should be all life and spirit; at times I can’t pray with any feeling, and I creep about like a sloth, I can’t feel any gratitude or any joy, and the evil one tempts me to think that God will cast me off; or may be, he tells me I never was a child of his, and so need have no hope of being saved; but ye see, Sir, it wont do to mind him, I know his evil words, and I give him one of God’s promises to silence him, he can’t stand against that; I generally get rid of him so.”

“What sort of promises do you find for that purpose.”

“May be he may come and tell me, when I am cast down, about my barrenness and unthankfulness, that God is too holy to look upon such a sinner as I am, I must be very wicked in his sight;—then I remember those comfortable words, ‘If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the *righteous*.’ And that’s a great word for us, ‘The Lord *our*

righteousness.' (Jer. xxxiii. 16.) I tell him I don't want to go to God with any of my own goodness, but I can carry the Saviour's righteousness for my covering. Perhaps, it is whispered (for he has all manner of cunning ways) "Yes, that covering may do at the last day, but you have not prayed to God with any acceptableness; you only said a number of words—you didn't feel them; you only make a mockery of God." He tempted me sore a few days ago by such thoughts. I tried to find some answer, and it was put into my heart to remember how the Lord said to Peter, 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' My trials, bless the Lord, are never beyond my strength; help always comes before I am quite overcome. There's nothing like trusting God for all; He is sure to carry us through if we can but wait."

"So you don't lay it much to heart I suppose," said Mr. Conroy, "if you do break a few of the commandments now and then; you can get over it, as you seem to know that your soul will be safe;—isn't it so, my good woman?"

"Dear heart, Sir, if I could think you were in earnest," replied the old woman, with a look of horror, "I shouldn't know how to answer you. God forbid that I should rest at peace on

my bed, if I was living in wilful sin. 'If I regard iniquity in my heart (says David) the Lord will not hear me.' I know that 'in me dwelleth no good thing,' but my Master keeps me from falling into open wickedness by putting temptation out of my way, and giving me a spirit of love to Him, which makes sin a very ugly thing in my eyes. Oh dear Sir! I have more fear of being left to myself than I can tell. I know that instant I was left I should fall into some bad sin: pray God I may not be tried!"

"Ay, my good woman," replied Mr. Conroy, "that I believe is the secret why one stands, and another falls. I have no opinion of man's ability; I've seen enough of that, and I have had many lessons about religion, but if ever I want another, I shall come to you. God bless you, my good friend." And he shook hands and put a guinea on her table. Sally Nash refused his money, assuring him that she was by no means poor, and begging him to give it to some one who wanted help more. He insisted on her keeping it, and withdrew. Mary had never seen her uncle so interested in any one's conversation where the subject was wholly of a religious nature. She made no remark, and he rode on some way in silence.

"Mary," said he, before they came in sight of the town where they were going, "You must get some bed linen for that good woman; you said she wanted some; and buy her two or three pounds of good tea, and any thing else you think she may require. I have had an excellent character of her from the Hardings, who have known her for years, and I have no reason to think the less of her from her conversation to day."

They now reached the shop of the bookseller, who had been recommended to them as a pious man, and a respectable tradesman. Mr. Conroy took up the newspaper, and Mary entered into conversation with the master. Her uncle had commissioned her to order a number of books to send into Devon, and left her to select them. She looked over many, and by the help of the bookseller made up a good selection: the bill amounted to seven pounds ten shillings. "I have a book here," said Mary, addressing him, "which I bought on my road, but the print is too small, perhaps you would be kind enough to take it, it has not been used, and let me choose one of a larger type." This he agreed to, in consideration of their being friends of Mr. Harding, but remarked that it was not a customary thing; he brought her others to look

at, and Mary chose one, the price of which was one pound five shillings. The book which she wished exchanged had cost her one pound seven shillings, and was handsomely bound. She asked what he would allow for it. He took it up, turned it round and round, examined the type, remarked it was not exactly the sort of book they had much sale for, but he would take seven shillings off the bill. Mr. Conroy looked up over his newspaper ; he never was so engaged but he knew all that was going on. Mary understood his keen smile at once, and turned away that she might not see him. The books were tied up, the bill paid ; and Mr. Conroy bowing very low as he passed the bookseller, " My friend," he added, " I wish you a very good morning, and many such capital bargains as you have just made ! " So saying he mounted his horse, laughing heartily at the excellent exchange his niece had made, and exclaiming every now and then " upon my word that's as good a thing as I ever saw effected ! Ha, ha, ha ! so that is one of your pious tradesmen ! a very knowing business-like fellow, with as clear an eye to number one as I ever saw. I don't abuse a man for looking to the main chance, provided he does it openly, as our friend did : but don't let the man profess

to be above the world, and to have overcome 'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' as I heard him telling you our friend the Rector taught his people to do; why didn't he take a lesson of him? He would do better to go to old Sally Nash, and let her tell him what human nature is; she could teach him to distrust his own heart, and to know what is in himself, and see that the love of the world is deep enough rooted there, poor man. Oh dear, your religious people are pretty much like others when you come to touch their interests."

Mary said she wouldn't pretend to justify the bookseller, although very likely he might not consider his bargain at all out of the common way of business, but she should be very sorry for it to be supposed that no religious person was to be depended on.

"No! Mary, I never meant that; I should then be putting them on a lower footing than many merely moral men whom I have known, for I have seen hundreds act uprightly and honourably, without a thought of responsibility to the Supreme Being. I have also met persons professedly religious, for whose characters I have the highest regard; but again, I do say, I have had occasion to remark, that many profess to

have their 'affections set on heavenly things,' who nevertheless are as worldly, as selfish, as insincere, as it is possible for them to be, without entirely dropping the professional garment. I don't say your friend is of this latter class, God forbid that I should judge, who am aware that I have no pretension whatever either by my principles or my practice, to sit in judgment on others; the man may possibly be a very sincere Christian, and he may be a useful active member of society—all I insist on is, that he looked to his own advantage to-day without any consideration of yours, and this I call a failure of the one grand and leading feature of the religion of Christ, which commands all men to love each other; now we know that love comprises all things."

"Yes," said Mary, "love is the fulfilling of the law, the Apostle Paul says."

"True, you can quote Scripture better than I can, and that is an excellent conclusion of St. Paul's; love is a strong affection, and if we love a friend truly, we shall find that his interest and happiness are dear to us, so dear that we may take all the commandments relating to our neighbour, and find that the wish of our minds is to keep them sacredly. Again, so dear to a real Christian should the love of God be, accord-

ing to my notions of what religion requires, that the exercise of it must be the highest enjoyment of his life ; my reason tells me this, although I can't pretend to know any thing of it by experience. Sally Nash is, to my mind, a fair instance of the influence of this principle. You heard all that Mr. and Mrs. Harding said of her, and you had an opportunity of forming your own opinion upon her to-day ; there was the operating cause, as Mr. Harding would say, love to God and love to man ! by the first, happiness and content are secured to her ; try her again by the other, you heard of her honesty, 'thou shalt not steal,' is the law she has in view ; look next at her contented cheerful spirit under poverty, 'thou shalt not covet ;' see her kind affectionate feelings towards others, the only sure defence against envy, malice, and all the vices to which human nature is prone. Love to God and man must be, in fact, the only principle which ever has been discovered for the suppression of evil passions, and the fostering of generous sentiments. Take away this influential spring of action, and what have you ? a being under the dominion of pride, selfishness, ambition, love of power ; restrained from excesses, it may be, by the fear of punishment here or hereafter, or from sentiments of

honour, or from the ties of society,—but still a being capable of the worst deeds when left to his own immediate guidance. Happily for us there is a rein, as we often hear, put upon the necks of men, which although we may be unconscious of it, keeps the world from confusion and disorder. But we are forgetting Sally. Nash's tea, and other things, we must ride back and order them, must not we ? ”

Mary turned her horse's head ; “ Why, uncle, do you appear to think so highly of old Sally, if you maintain that all human creatures are much alike ? ”

“ That's a very fair question, my dear girl, and I must try and find you an equally fair reason. Perhaps my disposition would have led me to like her, (using your phrase,) in her natural state ; I am fond of an open, light-hearted, affectionate character, as hers is by nature. Her many trials, too, interest me in her favour, and her contented rejoicing spirit pleases me particularly. I know I ought to attribute the power which enables her to bear up against her sorrows so well, to divine aid ; and perhaps, Mary, a part of the interest which old Sally excites arises from something of this feeling. I must own that if I should see many such instances of the power of religion, I should

wish to become religious myself. But unhappily I have seen too much of the mixture of human error and infirmity; I have been disgusted with the gloomy melancholy groaning ways of some of them, and their rash censorious habit of judging and condemning all who don't appear to be quite of their stamp, from the form of his face, the colour of his clothes, to his very shoe-ties. Believe me, Mary, it is as unwise and ill-judged as it is uncharitable; what do they gain by it? some few moping dispirited disciples, some few pains-taking mortificationists, who hope to help themselves to heaven by their duties—a few hypocrites, who find it answer better to be in repute with the religious than to belong to no party. Give me a cheerful happy Christian, filled with love of God and man, and he may preach to me as long as he will, I will hear him."

They were now turning down a lane leading to a village, and their attention was attracted by a very sickly looking man, about forty years of age, who was sitting at a cottage door nursing an infant. Mr Conroy stopped to speak to him, and from his answers learnt that he had been employed in bookbinding, but that he had fallen into bad health and was not able to continue his work. He appeared in a decline—very feeble and reduced. Mr. Conroy asked if he

had any assistance from the parish, he said he had, and that he had lately found a most excellent friend in the Colonel's lady at the depot. "What, Mrs. Percy?" "Yes, Sir, the kindest-hearted lady in the world, she comes to see me and read to me most days, and when she doesn't come herself she sends her maid with something for my dinner, for I haven't much appetite, and she thinks we can't get things at home so well."

"What does she read to you."

"Oh, the Bible, Sir, never any thing else, and she takes such pains to make me understand, that I quite miss it the days she can't come. I used to think nothing about those things once. I might have gone to my grave as blind and dark as a heathen, if God hadn't sent her to teach me better."

The poor man had scarcely pronounced these words, when Mrs. Percy appeared, walking towards the cottage, and the invalid's eyes brightened with pleasure on perceiving her. Mary and she accosted each other with looks of satisfaction. Mr. Conroy shook off his taciturn manner, and there was more done towards forming an acquaintance in the few minutes they passed together at the cottage door, than would have been attained during three such evenings as they had spent at the rectory.

"Are you going to Mrs. Darling's tomorrow?" said Mrs. Percy.

"I believe we are," answered Mary, turning to her uncle. Mr. Conroy made no reply. "You'll go, Mr. Conroy, Colonel Percy will be there: I hope you will." He bowed.

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Percy, half smiling, "you don't much enjoy these kind of parties, but perhaps you may be better pleased to-morrow, for I understand these are meetings for conversation. I think this sounds very promising; there will be three or four clergymen who will speak upon some given subject, I suppose, while the others listen. I expect to be very much pleased, and to learn a good deal. I think that sort of thing might be made very useful. I am sure that I, for one, should be very glad of some clear information on many subjects connected with religion, for it is astonishing how little one really knows when we come to examine our views, at least I find it so with me. I know enough about duty, and all that sort of thing, there our practice only fails us; but what we want, I think, is more knowledge, more light upon what religion really is. I find I can't get any very clear information upon many points which surely ought to be understood. I hoped, the other evening, to have heard some-

thing interesting in the course of conversation, but perhaps, being almost strangers, they may be more reserved with us at first."

Mr. Conroy smiled with his own peculiar look ; it was not one of contempt or of satisfaction ; but an expression which might be read for incredulity or satire, as his character was understood. Mrs. Percy seemed to catch his meaning, for she laughed and begged him to try another evening. He half assented, and they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

‘WALK IN THE SPIRIT, AND YE SHALL NOT FULFIL THE
LUST OF THE FLESH.’ Gal. v. 16.

‘BE NOT ENTANGLED AGAIN WITH THE YOKE OF BONDAGE.’
Gal. v. 1.

AFTER dinner, Mr. Conroy, much to Mary’s annoyance, began the story of the bookseller and his bargain; he commenced by asking Mrs. Harding if he was not a particularly conscientious man. Mrs. Harding had no suspicion from his manner, and commended him in the highest terms for his piety and consistent conduct. “Ah! is that the case? a zealous, active, humble-minded, consistent Christian!” repeated Mr. Conroy, using her words, and laying emphasis on the last mentioned epithet—“a consistent Christian! Hem!” (he muttered to himself) “upon my word! then Christianity is a most inconsistent profession.” Mrs.

Harding looked to Mary for an explanation, who gave it with as much charity as her regard for truth would allow. Mrs. Harding seemed quite distressed, she felt as a sincere Christian should, more for the dishonour done to God's cause than for the individual himself; she lamented, in strong terms, the bad impression which such a specimen of human frailty in a professor of religion, was likely to make on Mr. Conroy.

"Oh! my dear Madam," he replied, "spare yourself that annoyance, this is neither the first nor the fifty-first time that I have had occasion to observe that the world, and the things of the world, are not altogether so despicable in the eyes of the good people as they would have you believe."

"But, Mr. Conroy, I hope you will have the candour to allow, that, although some few do bring scandal on their profession, there are others who do honour to it."

"Why! yes, that perhaps I shall not pretend to deny, especially as I have seen an instance of it this morning, but I am nevertheless far more sceptical touching your very excellent people than you will like: I'm for none of your exaltation of human beings. I know there are few can stand it. Set up a creature above his

fellows, and put temptation in his way, and see how long he will stand."

Mrs. Harding interrupted him by observing, "that in admiring and wishing to imitate the virtues and graces of very advanced Christians, she by no means meant to imply that she fancied they were sustained by their own unassisted strength: she knew that this was not the case; they were strengthened and aided by almighty grace."

"Then why, my dear madam, are we to set them up as graven images to admire and reverence! No, let us carry things to their source; let us adore and revere that Spirit which is acknowledged to be imparted to direct man's steps, and preserve him from evil: but don't let us fall into the inconsistency of erecting a monument to the beggar, when we can raise one to the Sovereign."

Mrs. Harding entered perfectly into this sentiment, yet she still felt that some consideration was due to the characters of those individuals, who, assisted by grace, had long acted with consistency and honor to the cause of religion. She added, "I could not, for example, feel the same esteem for any one who by unguarded conduct brought discredit on his profession."

“ I think, my dear,” said Mr. Harding, “ that all our friend means to object to, is the habit too prevalent among religious persons, of paying a kind of homage to human merit, when they meet with it in some high professor, who, although secretly sacrificing to spiritual pride, ostentation, or a decent and respectable kind of avarice, is yet held up by them for his external sanctity and good works, done ‘ to be seen of men,’ as a being less sinful and more inherently holy than his fellow Christians, and as having achieved this distinction, in part at least, by his own exertions. It is very remarkable that every one of the distinguished saints in scripture has a blot in his history. Witness Abraham ‘ the friend of God,’ ‘ the father of the faithful,’ guilty of falsehood through fear and unbelief; witness Moses, ‘ the meekest man,’ guilty of intemperate anger; witness David, ‘ the man after God’s own heart,’ guilty of adultery and murder; and Solomon, ‘ the wisest of men,’ given over to the most foolish and degrading lusts. And so we might go through the list of God’s servants of old. But why were these things recorded? To lead us to think lightly of sin? God forbid. Not even the Infidel, if a candid one, can imagine this; for every offence recorded in scripture is followed by its appro-

priate punishment. Why then are we told of these things? To assure us, as the Israelites of old were assured, that it is not for any goodness or virtue inherent in ourselves that God is pleased to choose us; that 'it is not for our righteousness that the Lord our God giveth us this good land to possess it.' And also to remind us of what we are most prone to forget; 'Who maketh thee to differ? Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou received'st it, why gloriest thou as if thou hadst not received it?' It is remarkable too, how the saints of old were allowed to betray their natural depravity in those particular modes in which we should have least expected it. Men would have been glad to have said that Abraham had *naturally* a disposition to faith in God; that Moses was so *constitutionally* mild, that although apt to sin in other ways, he was free from any danger of intemperate anger; and that Peter's *natural* intrepidity would make him cling the closer to his Master in danger.—But this delusion is not allowed by God's word, which shows us that when 'to try them and prove them, and shew what was in their hearts,' God suffered his children to fall into temptation, they instantly exhibited the sinfulness of their nature in the most decided manner, by showing

that even in their *best estate* and condition they were altogether vanity."

"You have expressed my meaning better and more to the purpose than I could have done myself," said Mr. Conroy; "but tell me, how far do you consider that God may be said to put, or lead his children into temptation?"

"I think," said Mr. Harding, "that the first and constant cry of a child of God, when brought into knowledge of, and communion with him, will be, 'Shew me thy ways, O Lord, and teach me thy paths. I will run the way of thy commandment, for therein is my delight.' And such an one will keep close to his Guide, as a child just beginning to walk, holds fast by the finger of its nurse. By and by, however, it steps more firmly, and a little infantine pride springs up in its heart; it will now thrust away the guiding hand of the nurse and walk in its own strength, thinking, like the Psalmist, 'I shall never be moved.' Then the nurse, with a kindness mixed with judgment and foresight, leaves the little thing to its own ways, following it only with the eye. Soon, after a few exulting steps, the child falls to the ground, covering itself with dust, and wounding its hands; then with instant cries it turns and runs back to its

guide, with penitent humility, to have its hurts healed: just as the Psalmist after his grievous fall, cries out, 'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow; make me to know joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.'"

This conversation might have continued longer, had not Mrs. Harding been called away by a message from the poor woman whose child she had been attending, informing her that the little girl had had a relapse, and was alarmingly ill. Mrs. Harding went to see it immediately. She was one of those kind-hearted persons who are always ready for any act of charity, never seeming to consider that she had any aim in life but to devote herself to the good of others. She was strongly influenced by a desire that all she did might redound to the glory of God, and was willing to sacrifice time, ease of body, and every other advantage, for this end. She had very sincere and ardent feelings of gratitude for the spiritual light which had been vouchsafed to her, and her heart sought every means by which this principle might be manifested.

It was late in the evening before she returned; and the clock struck eleven just as Mary wished her good night at her dressing room door.

"I hope, Mrs. Harding, you'll go to bed soon, you look very pale and exhausted."

"I do feel tired, my dear, but I must sit up some time longer, for I have the psalms and lessons of the day to read yet. I always read them at night before I go to rest."

"The psalms and lessons," repeated Mary in a tone of surprise, "you surely won't read them to night! indeed you ought to go to bed, you don't know how poorly you look."

"My dear Mary, you couldn't suppose that I should close my eyes without feeling I had performed my duty to God, after all His tokens of mercy to me; I hope I shall never be allowed to do so."

"Do you think it then a duty, when you are exhausted by the fatigue and anxiety of nursing that poor little child, to sit down and read a long portion of Scripture, while you are not fit to attend to any thing?"

"My dear, I don't consider that my fatigue should be any reason why I should neglect what I consider right; we must do our duty and not think about inconveniences."

"But," said Mary, rather diffidently, "I don't see in what way you can imagine it to be a duty; I can't think that God intends religion to be a hard service. When the body is weary and the

mind exhausted, we are not capable of deriving benefit from reading of any kind; on the contrary I think we generally feel it an irksome task, and wish it over."

"That, my dear, is no reason for our omitting it, we must try and not feel it irksome; and as to wishing it over, that is very sinful, and we should not indulge it."

"But, Mrs. Harding, we cannot suppose that our forcing ourselves to read while in that state, can be of any advantage to our own souls, and as to God still less can it benefit Him. It seems to me just like a beggar expecting to please his benefactor, and to get a reward for eating the dinner with a good appetite, which he has provided for him. What does the benefactor gain? it is the poor destitute man who reaps the benefit; he eats when he is hungry, and thanks the giver. I think the reading is rather like judging it necessary to eat against his inclination, that he may take more, and so please the giver better."

"Why! Mary, would you omit feeding your soul because your inclination did not go with it?"

"No! I wouldn't neglect to feed my soul by the perusal of the Scriptures, but I would consider it as my privilege and pleasure, and read

them at a time when my mind was in a state to enjoy and profit by them. I could never see it a duty to sit up late and drag my mind as a slave to his work. I should perhaps open my Bible, find a verse that I liked, fall on my knees before God, thank and praise him for my day's enjoyment, for the rich provision laid up in Christ for His people, lament my sins and failures, and rise quite satisfied that He was reconciled to me in Christ Jesus, and would, if it were His will, raise me the next morning in vigor and energy and gratitude, to seek His face, and ask His guidance. This is all I should do. Oh! I should fear God and think Him a hard master, if I felt about it as you do."

"Well, my dear, we'll talk more of this tomorrow, for my conscience still binds me to my portion of reading for to-night, and I find that one infringement of duty quickly brings another, till you lose all sense of duty entirely."

Mary smiled, and withdrew to her own room. Mrs. Harding's views on this subject occupied her thoughts for some time, till on looking at her watch she found that more time had elapsed in this employment than was necessary to carry Mrs. Harding through her reading. She had been seriously thinking how far she was justified in considering Mrs. Harding's opinions

to be erroneous. She weighed, against her own judgment, Mrs. Harding's unvarying desire to be found in the path of duty ;—against her own consciousness of unworthiness and liability to err, Mrs. Harding's apparent humility and zeal in God's service ;—against her hourly failures in every duty and in every exercise of religion, Mrs. Harding's apparently uniform, consistent, upright, steady conformity to all she considered as the will of God ;—and in contrasting only those points which are open to the eye of man in examining the conduct of another, she lost sight of the possibility that He who searcheth the heart might find in each the same tendency to evil, the same natural enmity to good. Mary only saw that her friend appeared less under the dominion of sin, less influenced by temptation : and conscious that, with every desire to 'seek first the kingdom of heaven,' she continually detected herself seeking other things, she became oppressed and dejected.

It was now her turn to sit up and try the strength of her own illustration ; the beggar was now empty and hungry indeed, needing some food to recruit his exhausted strength. She knew there was in her Father's house enough and to spare, and calling to her aid that faith, which had appeared in the early part of the

day to raise her above the world, herself, and her corruptions, she cast herself before the throne of grace as a helpless, needy mendicant, craving the bread of life, which alone could nourish the soul. She pleaded nothing in herself which could embolden her to offer up a petition; she owned that she was sinful, and vile, and helpless, incapable of thinking a good thought, unable to put a right feeling into practice; she knew that her repentance, her tears, her prayers, were all stained by sin and could not procure her acceptance before a God of infinite holiness; she knew that the utmost efforts of self-denial, the greatest sacrifices, the deepest self-abasement would profit her nothing. But the blood of Christ was there to speak atonement for the sins of all His people! She knew this to be efficacious! she felt that it was sufficient to cleanse from all sin. Pleading it as her ground of acceptance, she poured out her heart to God that he would show her more fully Christ's perfect and justifying righteousness; she prayed that a constant sense of unworthiness might be impressed, that laying low at the foot of the cross, she might be raised above self by a view of His love, His condescension, His superabounding mercy to fallen man. She besought God that he would never suffer

her to find any satisfaction from her own duties, never the smallest comfort from any of her own performances. She asked for power to turn away from every thing in self, that she might see nothing, rest in nothing, value nothing, but the meritorious blood and righteousness of Christ. She earnestly entreated that her thoughts and affections might be more led out of self and the world, to that Saviour who had ransomed her soul. She pleaded the many promises wherein Jehovah pledges himself to dwell with his people. She repeated again and again our Lord's gracious petition to the Father, "that they may be *one*, even as we are one, I in them and thou in me." She urged the fulfilment of these words, for her soul thirsted for nearer access to the fountain of life, and her spirit longed "to be made perfect in love."

CHAPTER V.

‘ I HAVE SEEN AN END OF ALL PERFECTION.’

Psalm cxix. 96.

MR. CONROY and Mary were shortly after invited to accompany Mrs. Harding to Mrs. Darling's, a widow lady ; who resided in the neighbourhood and was considered a great acquisition to the place, from her wealth and the support she gave to every description of religious institution. The Rector and his lady were expected, but Mrs. Mires was not very well and they declined going. There were a number of persons assembled, besides three or four clergymen, and it was understood that the Rev. Mr. Clayford, from —shire, would be present ; accordingly, about an hour after the others had met, he arrived and was welcomed with smiles by almost all present. Mrs. Darling introduced him to Colonel and Mrs. Percy and to Mary, who was sitting beside them ; her uncle occupying the chair on the other side.

A tall thin lady followed close: Mrs. Percy inquired if she was his wife, and was informed in reply, that his wife was confined to the house, and that this was a hearer and great admirer of his, a maiden lady, a most excellent, active, benevolent person. "Indeed," added Mrs. Darling, who was replying to Mrs. Percy's inquiry in a very low tone of voice,—“she is the most energetic person possible, and so fond of Mr. Clayford it is quite ridiculous; I sometimes tell her, if I was his wife I should be quite jealous,” and Mrs. Darling laughed good-humouredly, but in the same subdued tone, as if afraid of an echo, and with the same step moved off on the points of her feet, which was her custom. Mrs. Percy turned towards Mary with an inquiring look, as much as to say “are they all so quiet and cautious.” She quickly found they were not, at least, all equally silent, for loud laughing resounded from the other end of the room. The young ladies had discovered that the tall maiden lady had travelled from —— with Mr. Clayford, and been several times taken for his wife, which mistake had occasioned some very ludicrous scenes; and Mr. Clayford being naturally of a lively disposition, was detailing them with considerable humour; the young ladies tittered

and looked exceedingly amused, the heroine of the tale also laughed, but seemed half annoyed at the awkwardness of the circumstances. Mrs. Percy observed to Mary, that she was glad to see that religious persons could laugh and be lively. Mary was pleased more on her account than on her own, that the party appeared to have got rid of their reserved chilling manner, and were inclined to be social and friendly ; she attributed the change to the presence of Mr. Clayford, which, in fact, was the truth : he was a leading character in the religious world, and as eminent for his sweetness of disposition as for his ministerial labours.

Much agreeable and interesting conversation took place after tea, Mr. Clayford had been visiting in different parts of the country, and was giving an account of his journey and the progress of religion in the various places at which he stopped. On the whole, he said, he thought that the gospel was spreading in a most extensive manner ; but that he, with others, had occasion to lament, that while there was a great increase of knowledge and profession, there was, unhappily, a sad deficiency in the proportion of genuine operative piety among professors ; he meant that there was perceptible, in too many instances, a languor in spiritual

religion, a sort of sloth and deadness, which, although it had not undermined so entirely as to level the outworks of the citadel, had nevertheless committed such fatal depredations within, that a skilful engineer would easily discover that very little was wanting to shake the whole fabric. He lamented this evil in strong terms, and exhorted all his friends to bear constantly in mind that we can none of us stand a moment in security, but as we are watchful in prayer and active exertion, "I am persuaded," he added, "that prayer is all in all, but it must be constant, humble, fervent prayer, we must lie low at the foot of the cross, looking unto our blessed Saviour with hope and consolation, but never losing sight of our own sins, so keeping the mind balanced as it were, not too much elated on the one hand, nor too much depressed on the other—to rejoice, yet with fear and trembling—to mourn for our sins, yet not as those who have no hope—to have full reliance on the Saviour, and yet to act as if the work of salvation depended on our own exertions, while we are still conscious that nothing we can do has any claim to acceptance but through Christ alone. We must press on, not stand still; those who do not advance, fall back; there is actually no such thing as

standing still in religion ; we must seek to attain greater degrees of holiness, for though man is utterly corrupt and incapable of any good before he is renewed by the Spirit of God, he becomes capable of great efforts by the agency of that gracious influence, after he is regenerated ; and it is expected of him that he should show the nature of his new birth and the attainments of which it renders him capable ; that he should be devoted in heart and life, in word, in deed, in thought, to his heavenly Father."

"Don't you think," said the tall lady, addressing him, " that there are different degrees of sanctification ? "

" Most assuredly there are ! "

" And do you not think that it is in our power to attain to greater or less degrees of holiness by our own exertions ? " " Certainly."

" I mean to say, am I not right in concluding that every one has it in his power to advance progressively in grace, until he appears to have reached a very exalted height in the scale of human perfection, and to have attained that happy state of feeling, which seems to bury the creature with its sinful inclinations in the pure love of God, and conformity to his will ? "

" If you understand by burying the creature with its sinful inclinations, the total cessation

of the actings of our corrupt nature while we are on earth, I object to this theory ; for I am persuaded that no man, let his attainments in holiness be what they may, ever so completely gains the ascendancy over himself as to destroy the power of sin altogether. I allow that some few by extraordinary efforts of self-denial, mortification, prayer, and watchfulness, have arrived at a most exalted and enviable state of sanctity, a state to tempt one almost to question if they are of the same stamp as ourselves ; but these are rare, very rare instances ; however, we should all hold before ourselves the most perfect patterns, that, in admiring their excellence, and envying their exalted position, we may endeavour to imitate their example."

"I think," said the tall lady again, "that Mr. Hervey, that excellent, heavenly-minded man, is as perfect a specimen of what a Christian may be as any one that ever lived, it is quite a treat to look at him ! he seems so full of the love of God, and so purified from all the infirmities of the flesh ! I think I never met with a more spiritually-minded person !"

Mr. Clayford rather warmly joined in the eulogium.

"We might," continued the lady, "select a few from the little circle we know, who would

well bear scrutiny; there certainly are a few (she added, smiling towards Mr. Clayford) whom we might hold up for imitation."

Mr. Clayford looked grave, and observed that it was always an unsafe thing to exalt the creature too much. "I have remarked," he said, "that where this has been the case, we have ever had cause to repent it, our creature-idolatry is not unfrequently punished by the fall of the idol, or at least some inconsistency is suffered to overtake them; a lesson to both parties; the one learns to distrust his own strength more entirely than he was perhaps inclined to do before, while the other is taught to place no fixed dependance on any thing short of Christ. It is a cruelty to any one to hold them up for admiration, for the consequences generally follow, as I have observed. God will not give his glory to another."

"But what a delightful, encouraging thought it is," said the lady, "that we have all such privileges; that we may all hope, by following in the path of other holy characters, to attain the degree of grace to which they reached! And may we not conclude, that as there are various degrees of holiness, so there are various degrees of rewards for the redeemed, as well as of punishments for the condemned?"

"We may, I think, conclude from scripture that 'there are many mansions,' and that we shall not all have the same places assigned to us, though every redeemed soul will be certain of a full portion of happiness, and every one of them dwell for ever with the Sun of Righteousness."

"Yes! but don't you think, that according to our advance in holiness, I mean according as our affections become dead to earth, and alive only to heaven; and we cease to be under the dominion of sin, that in the same ratio we may expect to receive our reward?"

Before Mr. Clayford could furnish the lady with an answer, (for he looked hesitating and doubtful what to reply) Mrs. Percy, who had been attentively listening to all that was said, turned to Mary, and with a look of mingled surprise and anxiety exclaimed, "What then will become of me!"

"And what," added Mr. Conroy, "of the poor thief on the cross, for he had no time for his work of holiness."

Colonel Percy brought forward the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, some at the eleventh hour receiving the same as others hired early in the day; and professed himself unable to understand the scope and intent of the para-

ble, if it was not to teach us, that salvation had no connexion or respect whatsoever to human merit, or fancied good deeds.

"I remember," said Mary, "a beautiful passage in the *Private Thoughts of Bishop Beveridge*, which, I think, is expressed in these words, 'I do not only betray the inbred venom of my heart by poisoning my common actions, but even my most religious performances also, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms or receive the sacrament, but I sin;—nay I cannot even confess my sins, but my very confessions are aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of, and my tears want washing in the blood of Christ.' I never," she added, "hear Christians talking of the ratios and degrees of their *reward*, but my mind recurs to these expressions of the Bishop: and I ask myself what expectation he would have formed, of the ratio of his reward in the future state."

The lady meantime had walked to the window, and was calling Mr. Clayford's attention to an account Mrs. Darling was giving her of her park, which scarcely now retained any thing of its former pretensions to that name. Mrs. Darling explained, in her own low under-tone of

voice, that she had had it all ploughed up to plant potatoes and turnips for the poor, and insisted on no ridicule being thrown on her profitable plantation. The tall lady laughed much, and declared she had carried her benevolence too far, and destroyed the beauty of the place altogether. Mrs. Darling pointed out further marks of destruction, in the levelling of a clump of fine oaks, which formed a noble group from the drawing-room windows. Mr. Clayford's opinion was called upon as to the propriety of such a procedure; he was a great admirer of nature in all her forms, and could scarcely bring himself to justify Mrs. Darling's measures, he, however, commended the motive, though he lamented the sacrifice.

Mr. Conroy, who heard and saw every thing said or done, expressed his opinions very freely, "he thought the next heir would by no means entertain a sense of the justice of the procedure." While he was delivering his sentiments, Mrs. Darling was explaining her situation: she said, "that being left by her late husband with the entire management of the estate, and with full power to do with it as she liked; and having no children or near relative to claim any thing, she considered herself in the light of a steward acting for his master, and her only aim was to discover

in what way she should best succeed in making her property turn to most advantage." She said with a smile, in which every one present readily joined, "that dress was no snare to her, and that her whole wardrobe scarcely cost her ten pounds a year; that her household economy was by no means an expensive one; that her servants officiated in various capacities; the coachman acting as footman, groom, or assistant in the field, as occasion might require; and the horses served the double capacity of drawing the carriage and the plough." She then proceeded to give the details of her domestic arrangements, and on summing up the difference of expenditure between the last few years, and those which had been past without consideration for the responsibility of her situation, and the claims of her fellow-creatures, the result was nearly incredible. She assured Mr. Clayford, that while she had formerly spent five thousand a year on almost useless expenses, she now found a few hundreds would equally well provide for all necessities, and she had the overplus to lay out as she liked. Mr. Clayford reminded her of the responsibility of such means, and the watchfulness which was necessary to prevent the too natural feeling of self-complacency attendant on the

possession of influence, whether of riches, rank, or power.

Mrs. Darling was truly a benevolent woman, and sought out objects on whom to bestow her charity; she did not limit it to her own immediate neighbourhood, for besides the many public Institutions to which she contributed, she relieved many individuals to whom her name was never known. She would pay for the education of any worthy clergyman's son, if his income was small and his means limited. She would in like manner furnish money to set up a deserving person in business; and privately send assistance to such as were reduced in their circumstances. She would lend her aid to all around her in a variety of ways, supplying their tables, and furnishing them with unexpected comforts: but with all these feelings of pure and active benevolence, there was a mixture of stern rectitude in her character that prevented her from passing over the errors of others and benefiting a second time those who had once forfeited her good opinion. She was generous and liberal to the last degree, as long as she considered the objects deserving of her favor, but when the motive which had induced her to assist them had ceased, she was not to be moved by any intreaty to alter her line of conduct.

This peculiarity in her character was considered by some as indicating a hardness of disposition and a want of that tenderness of feeling which is the effect of a heart warm in its natural sympathies, and forgiving in its habits, but her particular formation of mind was more probably the cause. She was a woman of steady and fixed principles, who without the aid of divine grace would have felt and acted with decision and rectitude. Sincere to the point of never saying nor implying what she did not entirely feel, and not excusing in another the slightest departure from this habit, the consequence was, that if she detected persons in deceit or false coloring, she ceased to place any dependence on them, or to continue her interest in their affairs. She was frequently known to pardon and to pass over impertinent remarks on herself, her dress, and her management, but she never countenanced deception in any form, and never assisted a person twice who broke his word, or otherwise failed in these points. She often continued her kindness in some shape, though not openly, to such as had transgressed in what might have been considered greater enormities, but these were her unpardonable crimes, and as her sentiments were well known, care was usually taken not to offend. Mr.

Clayford was a great favorite of hers, more from having been much esteemed by her late husband, than any other cause, for she exercised over herself the strictest habits of self-denial on all points, and was seldom known to evince any great partiality to any thing on earth.

It happened that the conversation turned on this subject, and Mr. Clayford's opinion was asked as to the lawfulness of earthly affections. He thought that Christians should be very cautious how they suffered them to center too much on any thing below; but he considered that a rational and strong affection for objects deserving of our esteem was by no means prohibited, indeed he thought Christian friendship one of the purest sources of earthly enjoyment.

"Provided we don't find the enjoyment interfere with our devotedness to better things," said Mrs. Darling, in a very low mild voice.

"Certainly," replied Mr. Clayford, "but I see no reason why we should so immoderately love the creature, when we have the Creator Himself for our adoration. I think that no one who loves his Saviour in sincerity, is likely to have his affections too strongly tied to this world."

"And shouldn't you say," said the tall lady, "that where we see a worldly spirit, and an

heart apparently taken up with worldly things, it was impossible there could be any real religion there ? ”

“I hardly know that I should be safe in giving so decided an opinion, although appearances would seem to justify it ; but I think I should fear that there must have been a sad remissness in point of duty before a real Christian could have reached this state of deadness : but indeed we are so prone to wander that we all require great watchfulness to keep us safe.”

Mary heard Mrs. Percy sigh heavily as Mr. Clayford delivered his sentiments, and she ardently wished he would say something more encouraging to a weak seeker after the kingdom of heaven : but nothing was said during the rest of the evening, that tended in any way to comfort or animate the discouraged person ; on the contrary, there seemed an unusual keeping back of the comforting doctrines of Scripture. Mr. Clayford certainly dwelt on the character of the Saviour, eulogizing its loveliness and beauty, but there seemed no claim to his immediate favour for the weak and tempted and sin-perplexed sinner, who would fain go to Christ for healing if he might. Mary saw and deeply lamented this, and Mrs. Percy seemed to feel it, for her manner in parting had an air of depres-

sion carried off by a look of gaiety which Mary saw was assumed.

Had her own mind been less settled as far as scriptural knowledge of doctrine goes, and had not her convictions been the result of the Spirit's own teaching, she saw that the nature of this evening's discussion, seconded by a man of Mr. Clayford's amiable and truly pious character, would have had a most painful effect upon her mind. She knew not what might be the feelings of others, but she was certain that an individual seeking to 'enter into life,' and impeded by a torrent of weakness, infirmity, and unbelief, would be in danger of being driven to utter despair, or to a state of recklessness. She knew that the Percys were desirous of obtaining religious knowledge, and willing, she thought, to conform to any measures that were pointed out as tending to lead them to what was right. Yet in what manner had the discussions of this evening tended to encourage the hesitating to go at once to the Saviour, with all their helplessness, for His strength and healing? When the love of the world had been cited as indicating a state of alienation from God, or at least as implying a very hopeless condition, Mrs. Percy's sigh had fully expressed what was passing in her mind; and Mary knew from a previous conversation.

which she had had with her, that although she was desirous of becoming religious, (as she had heard others express it,) she could not *make herself* despise the world and love God; and after what had passed on the subject, it was not likely that she should entertain much hope of better success. Mary thought that had they proclaimed the Saviour as her own eyes read his character in the word of life, as the Friend of sinners, the Refuge for the destitute, the Joy of Israel, the Comforter of the afflicted, the Defence of the helpless, the Strength of the powerless, the Wisdom, the Righteousness, the Sanctification, the Redemption of the sinner—that persons conscious of their need of such a salvation and such a Saviour, would have heard of Him with delight, and accepted Him with gratitude; but here was no offer of Him in all these glorious and endearing relations; those whom the world had ensnared in its entanglements were not told to go to Jesus for freedom; they might sigh and groan over their captivity, but unless they could *set themselves free*, and go to Christ healed of the love of the world, and free from the power of sin, they could not be pronounced religious characters, but might consider themselves excluded from His favour.

“Oh!” said Mary, sighing from her inmost

soul, "what a depressing, hopeless, fearful way of presenting the Gospel of life! Blessed be God! ever blessed be his holy name, who has so graciously revealed His covenant to me, and made me see my own emptiness and the fulness and sufficiency of my blessed Saviour! Come what may, His faithfulness shall never fail; and He who made the whole host of heaven has promised to keep me safe to the end! Oh, what am I, that my name should be written in the Lord's book of life! a worthless wretched mass of wicked vile depravity! by nature opposing God, and now while in a state of grace, perpetually rebelling against Him! Holy, holy, Lord God! what am I that thy loving-kindness should be so wonderfully manifested to me! Yet I am saved! saved without condition; the Lord's own Christ has shed his blood for me; my sins are blotted out, my transgressions remembered no more; I am justified from all things; this mass of corruption made complete in Him; this body of sin and death covered by the garment of His righteousness. Whoever will may take of the water of life freely; I desire to drink no other. Weary of sin and self, oh, what a precious Saviour does Jesus appear, and what a gracious provision for destitute sinners! Lord God, increase my faith. Draw me nearer to

Thyself. Show me more of thy loving-kindness. Make me to abhor myself. Cause me to see all sufficiency, and beauty, and glory in Christ. Teach me to love Him more, enable me to trust Him better. Thou blessed Saviour, whom my soul would adore, let me not dishonour Thee. Teach me to do thy will, to study thy gracious pleasure in all things, to have no desires but for thee. Crucify in me all these frightful sins that separate between Thee and me. Raise me to nearer communion with Thyself. God of my life, let my voice be raised in one endless song of thanksgiving, for Thou hast redeemed my soul, and wilt preserve it unto life eternal."

CHAPTER VI.

‘WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL? AND WHY ART THOU DISQUIETED WITHIN ME!’—Psalm xlii. 5.

‘SURELY, SHALL ONE SAY, IN THE LORD HAVE I RIGHTEOUSNESS AND STRENGTH.’—Isaiah xlv. 24.

MR. HARDING and Mr. Conroy having agreed to go into Devonshire together, Mrs. Harding wrote to her sister, who resided about thirty miles distant, offering to take Mary with her, and remain till the return of the two gentlemen.

It was one of those still calm evenings, in the month of July, which frequently succeed a sultry day, when they arrived within the last few miles of their journey. The sun had just gone down and left behind a faint glow over the surrounding hills; the woods were partially thrown into deep purple shade, and reflected their broad rich shadows on the bosom of a river which flowed beneath; glances of bright lingering rays blazed along the water and caught

the sails of a solitary fisherman's boat which was gliding down towards its haven. "How lovely this scene is ! how very lovely !" said Mary, contemplating it with extreme admiration.

Mrs. Harding raised her full expressive eyes, and sighing, repeated, "Lovely indeed ! if man had not defaced it by sin. This world would truly seem a paradise if God were honoured as he ought, and man were not disobedient ; but one sees every where the marks of his apostacy, and one's own heart weighs one down with the burden of sin, till external beauty ceases to please, and every thing reminds us that earth is indeed a wilderness. I am tired of self, and tired of unbelief, and tired of every thing but heaven !" And she sighed again deeply.

"Tired of self and unbelief," Mary added, "but not tired of Christ, in whom our life is said to be hid ; and 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'"

"But I cannot love him as I would, Mary, and I feel so cold and dead, and so unworthy of His favour, that at times I scarcely dare imagine myself a child of God."

"Oh ! Mrs. Harding, how can you speak so ! is it not, surely, ingratitude, after the many proofs

you have already had of His love to you in conversion, in enlightening your mind to discover His gracious character, and in preserving your soul hitherto from unbelief? I cannot think how you can dishonour Christ by cherishing such hard thoughts of Him, when you know and are persuaded that had He not first chosen you, you had never even desired to seek Him. You don't think that your adoption depends on your capability of loving Him, or your feeling warm and lively in His service?"

"I think that if I can't feel that I prefer His will to my own, and that I desire His favour above every other thing, I am not justified in calling myself one of His family."

"Are you not sure, Mrs. Harding, that if you were this moment required to give up any favourite pursuit or object, you would instantly relinquish it; and that, if by rejecting His favour, you could ensure to yourself any great advantage, you would at once refuse it with indignation?"

"Yes, I think I certainly should; but this would be no proof that I delighted, daily and hourly, to do His will, conforming in all things to what my conscience told me to be right."

"St. Paul has a long history, in the seventh of Romans, of a case very similar to yours; but

instead of giving way to sorrow and depression, he laments that while he is on earth it must be so, and, acquiescing in a conviction which must ever remain a humiliating one to human pride, exclaims, after his expression of despondency, 'I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' He could, with all his settled belief of inability to serve the law of God, rejoice, that in the inward man he delighted in it. And why should not you, as well as Paul, 'thank God, through Christ Jesus?' "

"Ah! my dear Mary, but St. Paul was a very different character from me; he wrote as he did from a knowledge of his own heart, but his conduct throughout was a living testimony to his love to his Master, and his faithfulness in His service."

"I think his case a very similar one to ours; does he not tell us that he is 'carnal and sold under sin?' and what do these words imply, but that his earthly, fleshly nature is ever rising up to harass and annoy him? Indeed, 'sold under sin' is still stronger in its application; we must understand by it the being under a bondage, and entered into a state of servitude to it. The one Master claims his obedience, and he has the desire to perform that which is good; but the slavery of bondage renders him inca-

pable, so that what he would, he does not, but what he hates, that he does."

"Yes, that is all very true, but I cannot enjoy any solid peace while I find such a disinclination in my heart to what is right."

"You wish to find something in yourself better than even the apostle ever hoped to find in himself, for he says, 'I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;' and I am very sure that if we wait for happiness until we find something good in ourselves, we shall never enjoy one moment's happiness on earth."

"I know this, but still I cannot agree with you, Mary, that while we know ourselves to be more than usually rebellious and self-willed, we should expect or even wish to feel happy. I desire never to be so unless I derive it from God."

Mary explained that she should consider it quite unsafe and sinful to talk of happiness, if she felt that she was indulging in any known sin; but if, on the contrary, she was persuaded that her heart desired to love her Saviour, and to seek His glory above every other good, and yet, notwithstanding, it still remained cold and lifeless, she would use every endeavour to regain her peace, by immediately carrying her difficulties

to Him, and pleading His promises to bear them for her, and to give her better feelings and energies. She would, after having done this, recal to her mind the countless instances of His favour, the innumerable marks of His loving-kindness, the times He had already delivered her from the bondage of corruption, the all-sufficiency that was laid up in Him, and above all, the price which was paid for her salvation, and the blood which cleanseth from all sin. "If this failed," she added, "I should draw upon my faith, and in patient expectation await my release from depressing feelings; but certainly I should never cherish them as right or beneficial. I think we are bound to give thanks at all times, and 'in every thing by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, to make known our requests unto God,' in the performance of which, we are assured that the 'peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.' Now if we don't enjoy this peace while we are truly studying conformity to his will, it surely is a sign that faith is at a low ebb."

"Oh! (sighed Mrs. Harding in accents of real distress) it is indeed a sign of faith and every thing else being at a low ebb. And how,

can you talk to me of shaking off grief, while I feel so utterly unprofitable ? ”

“ Because, my dear Mrs. Harding, I am perfectly convinced that unprofitable we ever are and must ever remain on this side eternity. I wish you could be persuaded to cease looking to self for any thing good or acceptable.”

“ My dear Mary, I don't expect to find any thing good, but surely if we have faith, we must give some evidence of it in our lives. I only want to discover more devotedness and self-abasement, for I cannot think that a proud earthly spirit can belong to a renewed creature.”

“ Where is the difference between your earthly spirit and the ‘ carnal mind ’ of which St. Paul complains ? May I not also ask if there is not more pride evinced in requiring some evidence of inward devotedness, some signs of purity proceeding from an impure fountain ? I must think there is any thing but self-abasement in the mortification, expressed on finding it impossible to offer a holy offering, acceptable unto God. Indeed I think we dishonour our Saviour and show a very strong and sinful spirit of self-righteousness.”

Mrs. Harding asked Mary what she would do in her case. Mary repeated the substance

of her own former words, but to no purpose ; for Mrs. Harding, unable to take her eyes off self, and rest them on the atoning blood, continued in her own perplexing opinions and unprofitable anxieties. Mary felt for her, and wished it were possible to do more, but, assured that faith was the gift of God, she could only plead with Him for her friend's peace, and bless His name that she had herself been so graciously delivered from legal fears into ' the glorious liberty of a child of God.' Her eyes wandered over the beautiful scene through which they were passing, and her mind entered into the repose that was stealing on every thing around her. She was in full possession of peace, of that heavenly peace which passeth all understanding ; she knew that while her mind rested on her Saviour the promise would be fulfilled, ' Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.' She lifted her heart towards heaven, and earnestly implored that she might be kept faithful, and not suffered to seek any shelter but that which was founded on a rock. Assured that He ' who had given His own Son would also with Him freely give her all things ;' her heart was satisfied, and happiness, pure unmingled happiness, reigned within.

CHAPTER VII.

‘ARE YE SO FOOLISH? HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT, ARE YE NOW MADE PERFECT BY THE FLESH?’—Gal. iii. 3.

‘FROM ME IS THY FRUIT FOUND.’—Hos. xiv. 8.

Mrs. HARDING’s sister had been some years a widow, and had settled in a very remote and retired part of the country, in a cottage beautifully situated on the side of a rich valley, overlooking part of the river which our travellers had passed. She was already looking out for them, and expressed much pleasure on their arrival. Strangers she rather avoided, but Mary was not a new acquaintance; and although she was less interesting to the latter than Mrs. Harding, Mary esteemed her character and understood her worth.

The time past agreeably under her roof, for she spent much of the day shut up in her own room, and allowed others to do as they liked. Mary

usually wandered about through the surrounding scenery, looking in upon the cottagers as she past their dwellings, and endeavouring to lead the conversation to something profitable. At other times she explored the less frequented paths, and with her book and her own reflections, the days glided quickly and happily on.

Mrs. Harding was not fond of long walks, but she occupied herself with assisting in her sister's charitable institutions, examining the classes at her school, and visiting the poor. The immediate neighbourhood was very barren of residents who did any thing for their religious improvement, but there was a little town within about seven miles, which contained a rather large body of individuals interested in the cause. The two churches of this town were filled by men whose lives were devoted to usefulness, and several families had, in consequence of their attachment to them, taken houses in the place. About once a month meetings were held at the residences of the various families in rotation, and all such as favoured the cause of religion in the vicinity were expected to attend. Mary had, previously to this visit, accompanied her friend to one or two of these evening parties, but had not found them so free from ceremony and stiffness as she had expected, and might be

excused for expressing a preference for remaining at home when now asked to go, but she saw that her refusal was received with so little satisfaction, that she thought it right to recal her intention.

Mrs. Harding's sister was a person who saw but one side of a question, usually the most plain and obvious, and having taken her view, could never be brought to understand that another might see the same object through a different medium. She had always a right and a wrong side, each distinctly marked out, and whatever deviated in the slightest degree from the former, was immediately pronounced by her decidedly wrong. She looked very much annoyed at Mary's reluctance, and as they drove along, swung her foot from side to side, her usual symptom of uneasiness. Mary perceived it, and guessed the cause, but took no notice. Mrs. Harding was leaning back in the carriage, apparently buried in thought. Mary looked around upon the scenery which in every direction was truly beautiful. She felt its beauty, and continued gazing, in deep admiration. Still the foot was swung. I am doing wrong, thought Mary, to indulge my own gratification, while another is feeling annoyance at a cause which by a little trouble I might remove. She wished

for a sincerely tender heart, a heart alive to the very weaknesses of human nature, and ready to sympathize in its infirmities, and, looking smilingly towards the widow, hoped they should enjoy their evening, and hear something that would please or profit.

"I don't understand," said the other, "why you should have objected, in the first instance, to going with us. I cannot make out what reason you could have for wishing to stay at home alone, in preference to meeting a select number of people, assembled together for the sole purpose of mutual profit and edification."

Mary replied that she had been at several of these meetings before, and if she must express her private opinion, she had not often found them answer her expectations; but the case might be otherwise to-night.

The lady argued that if such meetings were held for the sole purpose of benefit, she could not understand how any one professing godliness could justify the absenting himself without any reasonable ground. "I think," she continued, "that a Christian should always cast in his lot among God's people, and, wherever they are met for purposes of benefit, there should every professor be."

Mary tried to explain that if they were truly

formed for those purposes, and conducted with a view to such an end, she should rejoice in the opportunity afforded for benefit, but that there was frequently no such happy result; persons met with formality and parted without interest; little or no improving conversation was carried on, and no one seemed the better for the time so spent; they separated without becoming better acquainted, and half of them appeared afraid to venture a remark before the others, for fear of a wrong construction, or an unfavourable impression.

The lady maintained her opinions, and Mary left them in her hands.

The meeting was unfortunately more than commonly heavy, and Mary could hardly help smiling as the evening wore away, and the dullness and formality seemed rather to increase than diminish. There was a large assemblage of persons, the proportion of ladies nine to one gentleman, and the former mostly ranged together; they entered the room with a slow silent step, each bearing a work-bag, or a box containing implements of industry, and papers accounting for the distribution of money laid out in charity: when they accosted each other, it was in a low voice or a whisper; the gentlemen rather less timid, though all evidently under

some restraint, addressed one another in a subdued tone, one occasionally rising to approach within safe distance of the friend he wished to address, and standing before him in an attitude of constraint.

The ladies whispered to each other their exertions among the poor ; books were inspected by the treasurer, and new powers conferred ; fresh plans laid for enforcing economy in the domestic arrangements of the poor, whose want of management and frugality were strongly reprobated ; some asserting that they could maintain five families on the same weekly income which their thriftless neighbours squandered on one. One lady made a heavy complaint against a labourer's wife, who suffered her two elder girls to go to school barefooted and without frocks, while it was proved that her husband earned nine shillings a week, which was surely enough to buy bread, and clothe themselves, and their seven children. Another lady taking a more lenient view, thought it might be difficult to find shoes and frocks for so many upon that sum. She was answered that the mother might take in washing or needle-work. To which she replied, that she conceived the seven children would require all her time and attention. The other lady instanced

a poor family who had only seven shillings for ten of them, and contrived to make it suffice. Her friend said, that they of her own society might equally make their income answer double its present purposes by depriving themselves of a meal or two daily. It was at last agreed by the Committee, that the shoeless and frockless girls should for once be allowed to remain in the school, provided they made the shoes and frocks, which the generosity of the above-mentioned lady engaged to provide, last for the entire year.

The ladies having ended their business, and the gentlemen appearing ready for conversation; the lady of the house stepped forward and proposed a question in the name of all the others; she held a slip of paper in her hand which propounded the following inquiry—"What is considered the best and most effectual means of promoting the growth of spiritual religion in the heart?" The lady handed it to the clergyman of the place;—he looked at it for some time, and gave it over to another, who, pleading inability to do so much justice to the subject as the former gentleman, it was delivered to a third. This latter retained it, and with some apology for incapability, consented to give his opinions, provided the lady who had fur-

nished them with so useful a subject for consideration would kindly make allowance for his deficiencies. A general smile passed over the ladies' faces, and was as quickly dismissed.

The speaker delivered his sentiments with much ease and command of expression, and nearly as follows :—" He thought that attention to appointed means, and watchfulness during their use, formed the principal outline of the plan ; that the intermediate ground was to be filled up by various prescribed duties, each resting upon another, and making a uniform whole. That much and strict self-examination was required, together with great care that each discovered failure should be immediately repented of and avoided. That the scriptures should be carefully perused with feelings of devotional reverence, and diligently studied as the records of God's dealings to man, and as the revelation of his will. That after having read and well digested their precepts and instructions, great care should be taken to follow up our knowledge by sincere and earnest endeavours to be conformed to them. That our associates should be chosen with due regard to their principles, conduct, and habits. That no friendship should subsist between a believer and a worldly person, unless peculiar circum-

stances and relative ties made it impossible to break the connexion, in which case their society should be as little cultivated as possible; and the believer should constantly bear in mind that their calling, pursuits, tastes, and habits, are entirely dissimilar. That we should feel anxiously desirous of joining the people of God on all occasions, and embracing every opportunity of meeting them for purposes of mutual encouragement and benefit. (At this remark Mrs. Harding's sister touched Mary's arm, and looked as if she would say, "are you now convinced that you were wrong?") That in all the concerns and engagements of life the mind should be kept in a calm and quiet frame, ever looking up to God for his grace, and patiently awaiting it. That our deportment, manner, conversation, and even our dress, should partake of that sobriety which should belong to one of a separate family. That there should be a gravity and a composure of countenance demonstrative of the solemn and important thoughts which should at all times be occupying our attention. That all idle and trifling conversation should be checked, together with unnecessary laughter and vain jesting. That we should frequently deny ourselves in things lawful in themselves, in order to cultivate a spirit of mortification so

beneficial to the naturally sensual heart of man and so efficacious in subduing pride and self-gratification. Above all we should often and faithfully bring our sins to our recollection, that the sight of them might humble us before God. We should look at them in all their enormity, as committed against a holy and sin-hating God, and dwell upon our ingratitude and guilt, till we could abhor ourselves and become truly penitent; a state which was extremely desirable, as it mortified the flesh and rendered us more fit for the reception of grace. . Also it excited us to press on towards holiness, and purity, and devotedness. He thought our views were far too low as to what the renewed creature might become by constantly endeavouring to purify himself from all infirmity of the flesh; he was persuaded that we should soon see more loveliness and beauty in the Christian character if we would bear this in mind; we should set up a higher standard than we usually did, and seek to imitate it. He was persuaded that the creature might become exceedingly lovely, if the means of amendment were carefully attended to; he thought we might, and ought to, expect to see it freeing itself (if he might so say) of its carnal incumbrances, and its earthly propensities, one by one, and becoming so dead to sin,

that scarcely any thing was to be discovered but pure acquiescence in the divine laws, and utter renunciation of the corrupt will. He considered it the duty of every Christian not to rest satisfied until he saw something of this feeling in himself, and when he did, to bless God who had enabled him to get the victory."

Having concluded these observations, the speaker requested his other friends to add their reflections, but the impression already made appeared so favourable, and the sentiments so much in unison with those of all present, that it was agreed that nothing further could be urged; and a chapter being read, and a prayer offered up, the visitors withdrew.

Mrs. Harding's sister eagerly inquired how Mary liked her evening. The fact was, Mary had wished to profit, and had really sought to hear something by which she might be benefited, in order to which she listened attentively to every remark that fell from the speaker. A few thoughts indeed pleased her, but the whole, taken together, was rather painful than otherwise: she felt that the foundation was wanting; the edifice raised on sand. The Saviour was not exalted; His name was scarcely mentioned; His great atonement was, indeed, tacitly acknowledged; but the creature was

called in to aid in the continuing and completion of the work. Man was to perform this duty, and to avoid that evil ; to withstand this temptation, and to resist that inclination ; to conform to this injunction, and to escape that infection ; to assume this appearance, and to cast off that deportment. Such observances, performances, resistances, obediences, and even such appearances, were declared to be the best means for growing in grace, and for qualifying the sinner for the reception of the favor of God. Mary repeated to herself countless passages of scripture descriptive of man's unprofitableness, worthlessness, and helplessness, and as she heard of him in this new and strange character, as equal to such efforts and deeds of might, power, worth, capacity, valor, and fortitude, she almost wondered if she had heard aright, or had mistaken the whole.

But the time was come for her opinion to be given, and the lady would not be put off by any evasive answer. "How did you approve of the remarks on general seriousness and solemnity of manner ? for my part," she added, "I thought them very judicious ; and if you will not be offended, my dear Mary, I must say his ideas instantly brought you to my recollection. You know that I have often hinted to you that

I thought a Christian should always maintain a serious air ; and knowing as I did, that you had lately advanced much in religion, I certainly hoped never to have seen your countenance moved beyond a smile : and I was equally surprised and disappointed to see that smile widening into a laugh the first evening of your arrival ; I forget what it was about, but I think a Christian should have that command of himself, that nothing should excite him to lose his self-possession."

Mary felt this to be irresistible, and, though she was vexed at herself, felt impelled to endanger her character for piety for ever, by laughing without control. Mrs. Harding, who was not so much prejudiced as her sister, smiled, and began conversing on the subject of the evening's discussion. She objected to the view taken of deportment and dress as too strict, and therefore injudicious in its effects on the world, who were apt to think that religion made people look melancholy and dull, and neglect their persons, wearing any kind of clothes without attention to neatness, or what was befitting one's station in life. Her sister took quite a different view, and argued that there should be a distinction in the smallest particulars ; she would have the walk

more sober, the countenance more grave, the language more particular, the dress more simple and coarse.

Mary was again asked what she thought of the opinions delivered, and how she had liked the evening? and unable to avoid answering, she promised to give the subject more consideration that night, and to express her sentiments in the morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

'LET NO MAN JUDGE YOU IN MEAT, OR IN DRINK, OR IN RESPECT OF AN HOLY DAY, OR OF THE NEW MOON, OR OF THE SABBATH DAYS: WHICH ARE A SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME; BUT THE BODY IS OF CHRIST.'—Col. ii. 16.

'FOR EVERY CREATURE OF GOD IS GOOD, AND NOTHING TO BE REFUSED, IF IT BE RECEIVED WITH THANKSGIVING.'
1 Tim. iv. 4.

BEFORE she was called upon for this confession of her opinion, an occurrence happened, which did not tend to weaken it. Next to the room in which they usually sat, was a small apartment fitted up with book-shelves, and here Mary usually spent an hour or two each morning after breakfast. On the day in question, she had remained rather longer than usual; and looking at her watch, found she was passing the hour she had appointed to visit and read to one of the cottagers, who only could command a certain time of the day free from noise and intrusion. Just as she rose to leave the room she heard voices in the passage, and presuming

them to be visitors, waited till they should be settled in the drawing-room before she went out; but on then trying the door she found to her great annoyance that the key had been turned, by the housemaid, on the other side. Not knowing whom the visitors might be, and thinking that if she went in she should be obliged to prolong her stay till too late for her engagement, she thought she would remain quietly where she was, and again seated herself at her book. She had not been many minutes so engaged before she heard a conversation in the adjoining room, the door of which was partly open, and she feared to rise and close it lest she should be heard. "What sort of a person is Mrs. Harding," said a voice which she knew must belong to a gentleman; a female replied, in terms of much commendation, that she was every thing that could be desired in a Christian, so pious, so devoted, so consistent, so humble, we cannot say she is deficient in any one virtue; except, perhaps, that she spends more money on her dress than any of us would think consistent, but she may not see it in the same light. Next followed an inquiry about herself, and Mary felt her cheeks glowing, as she was obliged to listen to what was said, and felt the awkwardness of her situation. The

female voice she fancied she recognised. 'There was a hesitation in the reply, "I am told," said the lady, "that Miss Conroy is a pious young woman, but her manner is not so serious as we like." "Is her conversation in a pious strain?" "Yes, certainly, I hear she is very zealous and ready to speak on religion, but as I said before, she has such a lively manner that one cannot help fearing, before one thoroughly knows a person, that where there is any mixture of what we call the language of Canaan, there must be something of a worldly spirit." "I thought she had been very spiritual," said the gentleman, "from what I had heard of her." "I don't know, it may be so, but one usually looks for consistency in all things in a very spiritually-minded person; her dress, for instance, is quite unlike what we should call consistent; not that I mean to say she wears glaring colours or expensive ornaments, but there is a style about them that looks particular: for instance, she wears two flounces to her gown, when we should think one, or a few tucks, quite waste enough of money; and she has handsomely worked collars and an expensive shawl; her bonnet, to be sure, is not much trimmed, but it has a fashionable air which we should disapprove; and she wears silk stockings,

though I believe most ladies use them now: then again, she has a large massive gold chain hung round her neck, and a glass suspended to it, she may be near-sighted, I rather think by her eyes that she is; but we dislike ornament of every kind, and think the less one is conformed to the world, in every thing, the better. Perhaps I am doing wrong in saying all this to you, for, in fact, I know so little of Miss Conroy that I ought not to form an opinion." "True!" said the gentleman, "but one naturally judges from appearances, and I always like to hear of professing Christians conforming in all things to the habits of experienced and self-denying brethren." "I dare say," replied the lady, who was at heart a well-meaning kind of person, "we may be going too far in expecting every one to fall into our peculiar views; we live so retired, so entirely separate from the world; and, happily for us, so removed from the vanities and temptations of the world, that we can hardly judge for others; indeed we think almost every one who comes amongst us different from ourselves. I do think we enjoy great privileges! Surely no society of Christians were ever more favoured than we."

As this sentence was concluding, the lady

of the house appeared, and seemed delighted to see her guests. They talked over the preceding evening's entertainment, and the visitors expressed themselves highly gratified by the sentiments delivered on the subject of the written inquiry ; they thought the ideas so scriptural, so humble, so truly apostolic. In all this the hostess fully concurred.

“ Speaking on the subject of dress,” said she, addressing herself to the female visitor, “ you will be pleased to hear that my housemaid, Fanny Bartlett, whom I took from the school, is doing extremely well. I had a little trouble with her at first, for she was inclined to dress more than I liked, but my cook is a very steady serious woman, and talked to her on the impropriety of it ; and I took an opportunity one day that I saw her going out with curls in her hair, and smart ribbons on her bonnet, of telling her that such an appearance was not consistent with a woman wishing to profess godliness ; ever since then poor Fanny has taken off the ribbons, and I see nothing more of the curls, indeed I have reason to think myself very fortunate in my household. I do hope they are all seriously inclined ; I hear no laughing nor foolish talking—they all go about the house like mice, you wouldn't know that any one was in it. Sarah,

my new dairy maid, seems a very well-disposed girl, and it is quite surprising how temperate they all are ; my butcher's bills are positively nothing compared to what other people's amount to. My cook tells me she does not encourage them in eating meat, for they never get it at home, and don't require it. She makes them good wholesome puddings of the second flour, and bread with a little potatoe mixed in it, and never restricts them to quantity. She is a most invaluable person to me, and so careful about every thing. She is quite a mother to the rest. I hear her of an evening setting one of the girls to read, while the others work, and sometimes she reads to them herself. She never suffers any one to call upon them, unless she knows them, and they never go out without telling her where they go, and whom they see. I was glad the other day to hear her reproving Sarah for singing a foolish song, and I sent her a hymn book, for I thought if the girl must sing about her work, she might learn some of the hymns ; the next day I was surprised to hear her voice louder than before, in the very tune that cook had condemned, but on sending for her to hear what it was, I found that the girl, knowing no sacred airs, and perhaps not understanding the difference, was singing her old tunes to the

words of the hymns I had given her. I was afraid that they might wish to go and see the balloon that attracted so many of the worldly people last week, but they none of them mentioned it to cook, though I dare say the most of their friends were there. I was very much pleased with them, and indeed I found from cook, that when the mountebanks were in the town, and they happened to be there, they never thought of going near, though they were within sight; all this looks well, and like the conduct of persons whose hearts are set on better things."

The lady and gentleman seemed fully to agree in her opinions; the latter asked how Mrs. Harding and Miss Conroy had liked their evening. Her sister, she was sure, had enjoyed it much; she always liked every thing of that kind. Miss Conroy she hoped had also been gratified; but she was hardly able to say, for her young friend she feared had some peculiarities. "Ah! she appears very good-natured, but I should think inclined to conform too much to the manners and appearance of the world."

"I don't know that I should exactly say that of her," replied the hostess, "knowing her real character as I do; she is certainly not sufficiently aware of the importance of attending to

what she would call indifferent points ; but she is deeply interested in religion itself, and would, I believe, make any sacrifices, if she saw it needful, to promote its interests. She has also lived a good deal among worldly people, many of her nearest relatives being quite dark ; and I fear she may have been somewhat infected ; but we hope to see her recover from this. She is unfortunately allowed to live too much with an uncle who is in a very dark state, and this must be a great hindrance to the advance of religion ; but I mean to speak seriously to her on the subject before we part. She is not obstinate in her opinions, and does not take any thing amiss that is said to her. By the bye, she did not go out with my sister, I'll inquire if she is in the house."

Mary was terribly afraid that her retreat would be discovered. She heard the housemaid tap at the drawing-room door, a custom that was usual in this establishment. Her mistress desired her to come in, and bid her go and see if Miss Conroy was in the house. As soon as the door was closed the conversation was renewed, and her whole toilette brought under the consideration of the party. Between the embarrassment of hearing herself discussed

in detail, and the dread of being summoned from her retreat, she felt quite annoyed ; and looking from the window, preferred risking her ankles to remaining any longer in such a situation. She therefore lifted the sash quietly, and making a spring, succeeded in gaining the ground uninjured.

Now she was at liberty to reflect upon what she had heard. She looked herself over (as the term is), and being, as we have said, of a cheerful and lively spirit by nature, she could not help laughing at the distinction her dress had gained. She was often ridiculed among her friends for wearing her clothes so long, and her yearly bills were never beyond a very moderate amount ; and satisfied that neither in quality, quantity, nor value, she exceeded the bounds of propriety in her wardrobe, her next inquiry was upon the offending deportment alleged. She was by nature of a cheerful and buoyant disposition, inclined to see every thing in its best colours, and seldom given to depression. Now that her thoughts and affections centered in heaven, was it necessary to subdue all these feelings, and to look gloomy and sad, when she had new motives for cheerfulness, and fresh incentives to happiness ? She thought

not. Had her occasional residence with her uncle proved injurious to her advance in religion; as they concluded? She considered the point attentively, and decided that since she had been, from outward circumstances, compelled to look for and rely on the Spirit's teaching alone, her views had become considerably enlarged, and she trusted that her progress in the divine life had also proportionably increased. She felt assured that her chief desire and heart's prayer was, that her relative, so kind and parental in his care of her, might be found in "the Bundle of life" at the last day. Was she, while exculpating herself from every charge alleged against her, incurring a still heavier one by self-justification and pride? She considered the subject calmly, but thought there was no merit in that sort of humility which seems to meet censure, even when it is undeserved. She felt, on the other hand, that had her judges possessed a little more discernment, they might have touched on sins and errors against which she durst not have lifted her eyes in disavowal; but happily none but the mind of Omnipotence could read the secrets of the heart, and He had said, He would cast her sins behind Him, and remember her transgressions no more. Com-

forted by this assurance, and taking occasion from all circumstances to praise Him for His continual and unvarying love and tender mercy, she threw herself wholly upon His care, rejoicing in grace received, and praying for heavenly guidance to preserve her from evil, and direct her unto good.

CHAPTER IX.*

‘ NOW THEREFORE WHY TEMPT YE GOD, TO PUT A YOKE UPON THE NECK OF THE DISCIPLES, WHICH NEITHER OUR FATHERS NOR WE WERE ABLE TO BEAR ?’—Acts xv. 10.

Nor many days after this occurrence she met, in one of her long rambles, two of the ladies forming part of the society of Dunbury. They were making their weekly collections among the poor, and Mary proposed accompanying them, as she wished to see their plan of visiting. She observed that they scarcely touched upon the subject of religion. They made a point of minutely inspecting the family economy, inquiring into the state of affairs, and ascertaining the mode of management ; after which

* Lest any one should think this chapter an exaggerated picture, the Author begs to assure his reader that he has given the substance as related by an eye witness, on whose veracity every dependence is to be placed.—Parts have been withheld, and parts softened down, from a desire not to wound unnecessarily.

they proposed other plans of their own, and urged their adoption. They examined the children's clothes, and pointed out where a stitch might be well applied, or a patch added. They asked on what the family fed, and how the parents disposed of their time ; censured one for having the character of a slattern, and severely reproved another for gossiping, because she was observed speaking at a neighbour's door as they came in sight. The woman assured the ladies that she had only just left her work to ask her neighbour (who was skilled in reading events) what was meant by dreaming of drowning three nights running. The ladies upon hearing this avowal of her belief in witchcraft, commenced a long lecture on the subject, showing how Satan had first tempted her by idle dreams, next through her inclination for gossip, and lastly by her giving heed to seducing spirits, had led her into the worst crimes. They continued their argument until the poor woman was fully persuaded she had been guilty of the unpardonable sin, and had nothing to expect but eternal destruction. She wept bitterly, promising never to do the like again ; and after a few words expressive of their intention to continue their favour provided they heard better of her in future, they withdrew to

another cottage. Here they found great fault with a young girl whose mother had lately died, leaving her the charge of seven brothers and sisters, because they had been given to understand that she had not been to church more than once a day for the last two Sundays. The girl, a modest, timid-looking creature, expressed her sorrow in very humble terms, explaining all the obstacles that stood in her way: "I have father's dinner to get," she added, "and he won't be satisfied unless it is a hot one, and the children are all so young and giddy, that I can't get them to do any thing for themselves; I must wash and dress them with my own hands, and the baby won't go to any one but me; and if it is put to sleep, and I try to get to church, father won't mind it if it wakes up. He says he can't make it quiet."

"But don't you consider the sin of staying away when you might go," replied the ladies.

"Indeed, ladies, I know it isn't right not to go twice a day, but what can I do? Father would be put out and the children get into mischief."

"Oh, but that's nothing in comparison to offending God."

"No, to be sure it isn't, I know that, but I thought, may be, He would forgive if I minded

father and the children. I always teach them their catechism and hymns when I don't go, and read the Bible to them all."

"Yes, this is all very well, but you must try and get to church twice next Sunday; no one can hope to prosper who does not use the means of grace, and we cannot think of encouraging any one who neglects her duty."

The tears came into the girl's eyes, but she said nothing, and the visitors took their leave.

The next visit was to a house which contained two females, and Mary was told before they entered that she would see a young penitent rescued from destruction and placed out of the reach of harm, under the care of a most judicious and spiritual-minded elderly woman, who had kindly consented to her boarding with her and being under her own immediate eye. Mary felt an objection to intrude on the unfortunate young person, but her companions urged her to follow them. The elderly woman was sitting in a large arm chair sorting baby-linen belonging to a charity: she appeared to have been discoursing with the young female, who rose from her seat when the ladies entered, colouring deeply as she moved to one side a cradle which had been placed at her foot. The matron looked over her spectacles and bid the young mother

bring forward the baby to show the ladies how nice and neat it looked in the clothes they had sent. "I have been telling her," said the matron, "that she ought to consider herself the most fortunate woman alive to have friends and a home provided for her after the sad wicked fall she has had ; there are not many persons who would do any thing for her, as I was saying just as you ladies came in, for you know that though we are all sinners and bad enough, —they are doubly in danger of eternal misery who have broken through the laws of God and man in that scandalous and open way."

"I hope," said one of the ladies, "that she is willing to profit by your instructions ;" and turning towards the culprit, passed many eulogiums on the elderly woman's kindness and Christian benevolence, recommending her to endeavour to imitate her example, and to strive through her instructions, by repentance and prayer, to regain the forgiveness of God, and to be received into his favour. They asked if she read her Bible much, and what part of it she liked best to study, the penitent reddened and hesitated ; her friend replied for her, that she appeared to have made a very good choice, for she observed the parable of the prodigal son turned down in her Testament. They next

inquired how much time in the day she allotted to sacred purposes; the young woman was still silent; but her friend said that she made a point of calling her about five in the morning, and from six to seven she expected her to read the scriptures; they then breakfasted, after which she worked at her needle, making the shirts which the ladies had given her to do until dinner; she then took her work again till tea, and from seven to eight o'clock she had the time to herself to do any thing for the child or to her own clothes that she might wish; and then she read the Bible or Baxter's Saint's Rest till they went to bed. She added, that she made it a rule never to allow any one to call on her, and never saw any of her own friends in the same room with her, "for you know," said she, "it wouldn't do for her to see any of her former acquaintances, nor to speak to any one who might remind her of the ——" here the good woman's voice became so low that Mary could not distinguish the words, but she heard her continue, "Yes, ladies, indeed I have every reason to hope that the methods you have adopted will succeed. I think that total seclusion will in time wean her from the love of company, and being as it were shut out from seeing any living creature, and so out

of the reach of all kinds of temptation, it is not possible that she should get into any harm ; besides," said she, " she has consented, upon my saying that it was your wish, to let me see all the letters she ever receives, and she is never to write one herself without my reading it. Her friends are not to hear any thing of her until she has given proof, by a long and sincere profession of religion, that she is truly humbled under a sense of her sins, and willing for the future to become a faithful and zealous servant of God."

The ladies highly approved of the good woman's management, and again recommending the young woman to attend seriously to her instructions and advice, took their leave. Mary observed, that the poor unfortunate creature never opened her lips nor raised her eyes during the time they were with her ; she felt warmly interested in her situation, and more so when she learnt that she was the daughter of a most respectable tradesman, and had been deceived by a young man lodging in the house, who, beguiling her with a promise of marriage, had taken her from her Father's house and left her friendless and destitute in the town where the above-mentioned ladies discovered her. Mary resolved to find an opportunity of calling

on her alone, and for this purpose mentioned her wish, which was readily assented to by the ladies.

Before they separated, and while talking together about the different cottagers, the Curate of Dunbury came in sight; the two ladies, one of whom was by no means young, coloured up, and exclaimed, "Oh! here's Mr. Page, what shall we do—can't we avoid him?" Mary looked to see how this would end, for she could not understand them; she had heard the Curate spoken of in very high terms, and seen him at their houses. He advanced, however, looking little less embarrassed than the others, and uncertain whether to make his bow and pass on, or to stop and speak. They returned his salutation, looking shy and glad to get away. Mary could have laughed at this singular rencounter, but she said nothing. The elder lady seemed to think their manner struck her as strange, and said a few words about the difficulty of knowing what to do in such a situation, and the awkwardness of meeting a gentleman whom you were acquainted with and valued, but could hardly, consistent with propriety, hold conversation with.

"And why not?" asked Mary.

"Oh, you know two females walking together

could not stop and converse with a gentleman ; the people would be making some remarks, and we are anxious to avoid every thing that might be noticed as inconsistent. We are frequently obliged, from circumstances, to meet the different clergymen, and it makes it very awkward for us, because we have often business to speak of together, and we can't talk except it is on the evenings when we meet for business. I sometimes find it very inconvenient."

" And I should think, very disagreeable," said Mary.

" Why, as to that, Miss Conroy, you know that we should only look to what is consistent and proper ; it certainly is very perplexing sometimes, but on the whole I believe it is best."

" Do you think it wrong then to have any friendship with the male part of the community ? "

" Not exactly wrong, no ! I shouldn't say that, but I think the less intimacy there subsists the better ; people can't talk of you, and your own mind has less chance of being taken up with foolish ideas."

Here the conversation dropped, and the ladies separated. On the road home, Mary met the same gentleman returning from his walk. Accustomed to be shunned by the ladies of

Dunbury, he coloured deeply as he made a timid bow, and slid past her.

She amused herself for some time in musing over the singular restraints that human creatures voluntarily imposed on each other. She retraced in her mind the visits of the morning, and although not inclined to trust her own experience and wisdom, she could not but think the plans she had seen, ill-calculated to promote the increase of genuine piety. Surely, she thought, the poor could not be expected to like such visitors as these. They had similar feelings with ourselves, and must dislike being told how to spend their money, and how to manage their families. Was not every Englishman taught to consider his home his citadel; and who would be pleased, in a higher walk of life, to receive visits from the prime minister, and see his house, his furniture, and his bills inspected, under the plea of teaching him better how to manage his own affairs? She thought the system must certainly be an injudicious one. She was persuaded that if they would only at first carry with them the tidings of salvation, and by sympathy and kindness gain the affections, it would then be easy in a friendly manner, to offer an opinion, and to assist in forming a plan for improving their habits

of economy. She was further convinced of this from a conversation that she had had with some of the visitors, who assured her that their labours of charity were often ill-received, and unthankfully owned. They told her, that they not unfrequently met with abuse; and were so accustomed to have their motives misconstrued, that they were not in the least surprised when they now and then found the doors shut against them. They said, they never thought of being disheartened (a virtue for which Mary gave them infinite credit), but persevered just the same, thinking it their duty to persist in pointing out every fault they discovered, and endeavouring to improve their principles and habits. Mary questioned if they might not occasionally do as much harm as good, for they certainly must, in too many instances, appear like so many spies walking in to observe all they could of their neighbours' conduct. She perceived by their general conversation, that in speaking of the poor, they seldom brought forward any thing beyond their social virtues, and their different plans of family arrangement. They talked of improvements in their habits—of amendment in their families. They were much interested in the progress of their schools, and in the welfare of the various societies

instituted for useful and benevolent purposes ; but Mary could not help noticing that the subject of religion itself—the work of the Saviour—was not often brought forward. She remembered with surprise and regret, that at her last visit to Dunbury, as well as at this period, she rarely heard any thing of cheerful piety ; she seldom heard the happiness of a believer spoken of, or the gracious promises of God rejoiced in, or the glories of the new kingdom dwelt on. She was persuaded that they were the Lord's children, but their melancholy habits and gloomy manners quite distressed her—it was not natural—it was not expedient ; many persons half inclined to think of religion, were deterred from the attempt, by seeing the effect of their views on their appearance and manners.

She had occasion to see this still more forcibly, before her visit was concluded, in the instance of a young lady, the niece of a widow who resided in the neighbourhood. The young girl was of a lively, animated disposition, and although not considered pious, was rather disposed than otherwise to make herself acquainted with the doctrines of real Christianity, and conform to its precepts. She had lost her parents within the last few years, and

having no other relatives than her aunt, was taken under her care, and treated with much kindness and affection; but this lady had unhappily imbibed some very rigid and unattractive notions on certain points connected with the outward observance of religion, and the young girl found it so impossible with her lively character to conform to what was required, that she quickly lost all interest in the subject, and gave up all hope of ever being able to come up to what appeared to her the requisite test of a real Christian. The aunt became so concerned at the hopeless result of her efforts, that she either addressed her niece as a person wilfully excluding herself from the kingdom of heaven, or overpowered her with lectures on the duties of Christianity. In every way this plan was an injudicious one. Had she attempted to win her to the Gospel by showing its loveliness, and its happy effects in rejoicing the heart and exalting the views, she might, humanly speaking, have gained her attention and respect to its principles, if not an heart-felt conviction of its truths. But unfortunately, the aunt, with almost every excellence that could adorn a sincere Christian, still lacked one virtue, that of making allowance for those who were uninfluenced by divine

grace ; and having adopted hard and rigid views of self-denial on unimportant points, she expected all around her to concur in her ideas. The niece found this most irksome, as has been said, and the aunt slackened nothing of her importunity ; so that the consequence was, as might have been anticipated, the one was rendered anxious and uncomfortable, the other completely miserable. This state of things had gone on for some time, until the high-spirited niece resolved no longer to be the means of disturbing the family quiet, nor to endure the hourly bondage under which she felt herself to lay. She suddenly quitted her aunt's residence, and went abroad with a family of whom she had known something in her father's life-time. The aunt was at first extremely wretched ; but finding her comfort materially increased by the absence of a person whose heart she could not bend, she became reconciled to her departure. The niece frequently wrote, but never touched on the subject of religion, except in her first letter, wherein she explained her reasons for quitting. The aunt continued to expostulate, to warn, to intreat, but she had mistaken the means when the opportunity seemed favourable, and her expostulations were now no longer heeded. Such was the melancholy result of an unneces-

sarily rigid external discipline; and such, it is feared, is too often the effect among the best-intentioned persons. Mary found it so in more than the present instance. There was in the same neighbourhood a large family who were brought up in like subjection. The sons found their home so disagreeable, that when they arrived at manhood, they preferred any profession to remaining there, and never made their parents a longer visit than decency required. No books of any nature were allowed in the house but such as treated on religion, and the doors were closely barred against every individual whose pretensions to piety were not fully established. Such a system was not likely to render the gospel attractive in the eyes of any one, far less in those of youth.

CHAPTER X.

‘WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY.’
2 Cor. iii. 17.

Not many days after this, Mary accompanied her friends to dine at a house in the neighbourhood, where a large party was invited to meet them. The half-hour before dinner was spent with as much formality and silence as usually are felt, at that awkward period, among English people ; but Mary would have thought little of this, had the stiffness and restraint worn away after they were seated at table. This was not, however, the case ; for the good people of Dunbury seemed to consider it a duty to exercise self-denial in every enjoyment of life ; and they succeeded so effectually in their endeavours, that a person unaccustomed to their habits, and unacquainted with their motives, would have considered them either in

the light of rigid papists under penance, or a body of people actuated by different feelings from the rest of mankind. The proportion of ladies infinitely preponderated, and some might maliciously have imagined that this circumstance would have been favourable to conversation ; but it was not so ; the ladies of Dunbury were either singularly shy and timid, or they maintained a vigilant guard upon their lips ; the gentlemen attempted conversation, but in vain ; the young ladies blushed and looked confused, and the repulsed gentlemen seemed afraid that they were infringing on the rules of decorum. The lady of the house begged them to ask the ladies to take wine, which was accordingly done, with many apologies for having required the hint ; the young ladies declined with an air of great embarrassment, and most of the elderly ones feared that wine would not agree with them. Mary happened to be seated beside the curate whom she and her companions had met on the day of their visits ; she accepted his invitation, and after two or three attempts to draw him into conversation, she fairly succeeded not only in inducing him to talk, but in gaining his confidence. This could not have been effected, had not a young lady who sat on Mary's other hand, and was a late addition to the society of Dun-

bury, commenced a discussion with another clergyman and Mrs. Harding, on the employment of the Sunday. The young lady was extremely pretty, and evidently accustomed to attention. The elderly clergyman, a good-humoured and amiable man, listened to her remarks with great kindness. She told him how she disposed of her hours on the Sunday, and how careful she was to avoid every thing that would tend to remind her of her weekly engagements. "When we were travelling in Ireland with mamma, we always made a point of ordering a cold dinner at the inns, that we might let them see we disapproved of work of any kind going on ; but we could not help laughing one day, when the waiter told us they had to send over half the town to try and get some cold meat, as we had positively forbid their cooking any for us ; and they actually attended so strictly to the injunction, that they brought in cold mutton, cold fish, cold potatoes, and cold pudding, telling us by way of merit, that having been busy with company the whole of Saturday, they had been obliged to cook our next day's dinner after twelve o'clock on Saturday night." The young lady next remarked on the many difficulties that came in the way of a person's strictly obeying the fourth commandment. The

clergyman fully agreed with her, and observed that we might almost overstrain the point. "Do you think I do right in not reading my letters on that day? I never do allow myself to open one, I always put them in my bag till Monday morning, for I think we ought to exclude every thing that relates to worldly affairs; don't you think so, Mrs. Harding?" Mrs. Harding quite assented. "And you know (continued the young lady, smiling rather significantly) that we sometimes have letters that we would like very much to open; you know, Mr. Ford, that we are sometimes very anxious about letters, and it is not always so easy when we get them, to put them away; we would like to see what our friends say, and what they are doing, and how they bear our absence." The clergyman smiled, and said he knew this must sometimes be the case.

While this conversation was going on, the curate was making his remarks upon the state of society in the place. It appeared that he had not long come into the neighbourhood, and had found it extremely difficult to fall into their habits, because the society he had left were altogether of a different class of Christians. The young lady's reflections on the observance of the Sabbath had caught his attention, and he

gave his opinions to Mary with much liberality, mixed with entire reverence for the spiritual law. He disapproved of their manner of spending the day, and was convinced that they not only burdened their own souls, but rendered religion in the eyes of others perfectly distasteful. He lowered his voice as he told Mary that there was a spirit of legality among them all, which was terribly oppressive. "The Sunday here," said he, "is unlike any thing I ever saw elsewhere. They go to church as a positive duty, apart from all feelings of cheerfulness; ill or well they think themselves bound to rise from their beds, and go and offer their devotions to God. I can hardly explain the grounds upon which they act, but I feel that they have not the free and happy spirit which surely belongs to the adopted child of God."

Mary asked if he meant to imply, that the going up to the House of God was ever to be considered a matter of indifference?

"Certainly not," he exclaimed, "I deem it one of the highest honours to be allowed to approach our heavenly Father. I think it our greatest privilege; but, understand me, I am inclined to make a vast difference between rejoicing in being permitted to stand before God in prayer and praise, and appearing in His

presence with a sad countenance, like a slave obeying his master's commands. I should, as a private individual, endeavour by every motive for gratitude, to raise my feelings in devotion ; but were I suffering in body, and unable to attend to any thing serious, I should not consider that I sinned because I allowed myself rest, and remained at home, seeking to improve the time by looking to my Saviour for help and strength. I regret to see that among our friends here, estimable and excellent as they are, and I take shame to myself when I compare myself with them, there has crept in so much that is injudicious and unnecessary. They not only conceive it right to exercise the most severe restraint upon themselves, but carry their notions so far that none are considered in the right path, who do not exactly conform to their views. I do assure you," he added, still lowering his voice, "that I am often at a loss to understand them ; and I really think that in time, if I remain here, I shall be wholly unfit to live again with other people. One imperceptibly falls into the ways of those with whom one constantly associates. I am certain that I am already infected with some of their peculiarities." Mary smiled as she called to mind the ladies' awkward reception of him, and his equally

awkward manner. He seemed to understand her, for he quickly entered into some of the already visible effects of the system. She gathered from his remarks, that the female part of the community, especially, adopted a line of conduct altogether new and unaccountable. "Indeed I feel ashamed to tell you how their peculiarity of manner has acted upon me since I came here. I actually scarcely know how to behave when I meet a lady; (Mary almost laughed at his confession) it is quite true, I assure you. I durst not have attempted to address you, had you not shown by your manner that you were in the habit of conversing with gentlemen, as well as with ladies, and were not afraid of contamination. When I first came, I did not understand their ways, and as a matter of course, offered my arm to any lady I might be walking with, as every gentleman would do. I soon saw that this was not right, for the lady coloured and drew away, as if I had purposely affronted her. I know better now, and never think of offering any civility. I believe they don't even like to be addressed in conversation. I am always perplexed how to behave, and if I can, I generally keep out of their way. I don't know what my friends will think of me when I return into Wiltshire. I expect to be

taken for an idiot, for you have no idea how the constant feeling of restraint acts upon one's nerves."

"I have a very good idea," said Mary, "for I often feel like a fool, or as if I had committed some crime which prevented me from holding up my head; they all seem so subdued and so afraid of each other, that it is impossible to feel at ease before them. I often ask myself what they all mean,—what they gain by taking up such vexatious ways?"

The Curate still speaking very cautiously, said, "that he was convinced from all that he had observed, that they did the cause of religion serious injury, by presenting it in so hard and ungracious a form; besides," he added, "though I would only say this in confidence, and with all respect for their virtues, I am quite concerned to see how they stifle the best feelings of their nature by this unnatural constraint; they accustom themselves to dwell so much upon their inward corruption, that they look upon each other with the *same eye* that has been *examining self*, and knowing the secrets of their own hearts, they consider those of others in the same light. They unfortunately cannot look away from the creature; they are for ever seeking and desiring to find some good fruit

which they might gather as an offering to God ; and never attaining their wish, and being always disappointed, they become soured and gloomy, always talking of their sins, if they do speak on religion, and never being able to cast their burden upon the Lord, although He has promised to sustain them. It is impossible for such a system to produce any thing like cheerful piety, and you will find that there is very little sociability among them. They are most estimable, benevolent Christians, very active among the poor, and very conscientious in their dealings, but there is a degree of distrust and suspicion towards each other, which cannot fail to strike an observer. If they could look more to the Saviour and less to self, we should soon see a change of feeling. The love of Christ necessarily begets love to His people ; there would be less of that formality and reserve of manner so repulsive to a stranger, and more of the kind, warm-hearted, friendly principle, which the disciples of our Lord were enjoined to exhibit towards each other. Oh," added he, sighing, " human creatures are frail comforters at best, but doubly so when not weaned from a reliance on self, and fixed on a strong foundation ! Heaven will be a blessed place, where the hearts of men will all rest on the living God, and His

glory will be their sole theme! We want to know more of Christ on earth, Miss Conroy,—we know enough of self to see that it is altogether worthless, but He is our sufficiency—a blessed surety for his people—a strong defence against every enemy—a safe refuge from self!”

“Ah!” replied Mary, “self I find to be my worst enemy, as Rutherford says, ‘The great house devil that lieth and eateth in every man’s bosom, is that idol that killeth all, *himself*.’ Not so much in the way of sin, though here it is strong enough to kill any thing; but, as an enemy to Christ, I feel its strength and energy irresistible and unceasing.”

“And so we shall ever find it till death free us from the bond of corruption; those who expect to get rid of the old Adam on this side eternity, neither know themselves nor understand the word of God. Hence the exhibition of all that tissue of uncomfortable feeling and expression which we have been lamenting; they know not that they can never alter the nature of the old man, and anxious to possess virtues which they cannot discover in themselves, they adopt a certain appearance of sanctity, and lay on themselves restraints which they hope will have some influence on their heart. Many of

them, no doubt, see its inefficacy, and would gladly throw off the artificial garb, but custom, habit, and the restraint of opinion forbid the effort. Oh, how it grieves one to see God's own children living together as strangers, instead of meeting with joyful faces to tell of their Father's love, and of their common Saviour's glory! We have a subject that would exhaust all the power of language, and still remain undiminished. Why do we not more frequently bring it forward, rather than bend our minds down to earth by complaints of our infirmities, as if the Lord were not aware of them, and had not promised to remember our transgressions no more, and to strengthen us with strength in the inner man? We are ever forgetting that Christ is 'the Lord *our righteousness*,' and that, in ourselves, there is nothing but sin and misery; —but, although the conviction is deeply humiliating, does it not excite feelings of gratitude? Can any thing rejoice the heart or cause it to overflow with thankfulness like the assurance of having a certain claim to the favour and protection of almighty God? We know, that looking to ourselves, we should pronounce the sentence 'lost!' lost for ever! but despairing there, we turn our eyes elsewhere,

and faith enabling us to fix them on the Saviour, we exclaim, 'To whom else should we go; thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.' Oh! there is no happiness until we can rest all our hopes on Him—the slenderest hold on any thing in self will mar our best enjoyments."

Something being said at this moment respecting self-denial, Mary entered upon the point, and the curate said he had never been able to fall into the views of the people of Dunbury, for they carried their notions much beyond what scripture seemed to him to enjoin; they seemed to forget, in the exercise of the virtue, that although required to deny self, that they might the better glorify their Saviour, all things were, in fact theirs, through union with their Head, not only to hold, but '*richly* to enjoy.' And he considered that there was as much pride of virtue in denying to one's self and others the lawful and innocent pleasures of life, as could be found in the Romish doctrines of works of supererogation."

"I was very much surprized," said Mary, "some days back, on my friend, Mrs. Harding, offering to call and take the two Miss Strait-backs and drive to the ruins of the priory, to

hear them make several objections. Mrs. Harding, however, finally prevailed, and we all enjoyed it extremely ; it was a most lovely day, and none of us had been that road before ; the two ladies talked and really seemed to have left behind their reserved manners. I hoped they would never be resumed, but the next day when we called, they told us that excursions of mere pleasure did not suit them at all, they found their minds quite unfitted for their duties, and they resolved never again to make another experiment. I was quite at a loss to understand them, and Mrs. Harding also said she thought that change of air and scene and occasional relaxation from business quite necessary to the mind and body ; for my part, I find that a little variety is rather beneficial than otherwise, a Christian knows that he never leaves home without his Master's presence, (supposing that his removal is not an unlawful one) and he finds in every place opportunities of usefulness or subjects of praise. Amidst fine scenery, I think the mind, when resting surely on Christ, is peculiarly led to devotional exercises : every thing around is beautiful, all the work of our heavenly Father, and all things ours, for we 'are Christ's, and Christ is God's !' "

" I wish," said the curate, " that more of us

saw religion in this cheerful light, but it certainly is not so here."

"And why," asked Mary, "don't you endeavour to set them right?"

He smiled, and spoke of the danger of a young man's appearing to dictate to others older and wiser than himself. Mary said this might be the case in some respects, but she still thought it was a duty in those who saw clearly to make the effort to enlighten others. He replied, that this would be doing little, for after all the fault lay still deeper :—here he hesitated, and Mary added "I understand you, and know how it is; the ministers of the truth here preach a legal gospel, and the consequence is, that the hearers retain the yoke of bondage, and cannot see clearly the free salvation that is offered." He made no reply, but shortly after said, that he thought that the gospel was in these days very much weakened in force, it was more generally preached, but with less purity and power than formerly. There was such an unhappy mixture of human capability, that he could discover a sad departure from the pure and perfect doctrines of the church, which were established on the scriptures of truth. On Mary's inquiring what he thought the principal fault of the ministry of which he com-

plained;—he said, he conceived that besides the not teaching the people constantly the doctrines of the Bible, they erred in dwelling unceasingly on the precepts, which surely were intended to follow the belief and adoption of the doctrines of grace, and not to precede them. He said, the people required teaching, they wanted information on the leading grounds of their salvation; it certainly was of very little use to lay before them a long train of duties before they understood the means by which they were to be performed. “Hundreds” he added, “who profess to be followers of Christ, know little or nothing of Him in His relations to His people; if you ask them of His offices they can only tell you that they hope to be saved by Him at the last day; they are grossly ignorant of Him as a teacher, justifier, sanctifier, and preserver: and all their knowledge amounts to a vague belief in His power and willingness to save them, provided they will conform to certain terms; and all their confidence, to a kind of hope, wavering in proportion to their sensible comfort. This is not the faith of Scripture! The Apostles knew and taught other things, they address believers in Christ as ‘the elect of God, chosen of the Father,’ called unto holiness; and they

admonish and urge them to good works, as fruits of the gracious principle which animates them, and evidences to the world of their peculiar calling; but we do not find them exhorting the unconverted to yield the fruits of righteousness, before they have been made to receive Christ as their Saviour. According to their faith did our Lord bestow strength, as we read in the many instances of persons bowed down by infirmity and applying to Him for help. He, no doubt, first gave the faith;—for faith, we are told, is the sole gift of God, and having given to the sinner, diseased in mind or body, power to trust Him fully, he then restores Him to perfect health and strength. Such is the manner in which divine life is imparted, and, no doubt, in proportion to our faith and our knowledge of the Saviour is the life of holiness maintained in the soul. A gospel, therefore, which does not preach Him in all His fulness, but calls upon the creature for his assistance in the work of salvation, cannot do otherwise than make weak and lean hearers. We are commanded to ‘preach Christ,’ and where this is faithfully done, the effect must be proportionably great. The sinner, brought to a knowledge of himself and discouraged under a sense of his infirmity, sees with joy and thankfulness

that there is a salvation provided for him, exactly suited to his case. He hears that Christ is willing to receive him just as he is—that He has paid the price of sin and removed it for ever from His people—that He justifies them from all sin—that He promises to give them hourly strength—that He undertakes to be their defence against every enemy—that He will uphold them in all dangers and difficulties—that He will deliver them out of every temptation—that He will keep them safe to the end, never suffering any one to pluck them out of His hand, and that He will finally ‘present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.’ And when the sinner thus becomes acquainted, in his own experience, with ‘the mercies of God,’ he then becomes anxious to ‘present his body’ and all his faculties, as ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.’ When he can speak of himself as ‘having these promises,’ he then, and then only, becomes sincerely desirous to ‘cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.’ And then, and then only, he begins to know the force of that expression; ‘the love of Christ constraineth us.’”

Mary felt much interested in this conversa-

tion, and was sorry that she was obliged to leave it so soon, but Mrs. Harding's carriage was waiting. Holding out her hand to her friend, without regarding the remarks that might be made by the criticising party, she took her leave.

CHAPTER XI.

'THERE SHALL BE A FOUNTAIN OPENED—FOR SIN AND FOR
UNCLEANNES.'—Zech. xiii. 1.

'COME BUY WINE AND MILK, WITHOUT MONEY, AND
WITHOUT PRICE.'—Isaiah lv. 1.

'ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME TO BE A CHRISTIAN.'
Acts xxvi. 28.

MARY was not long in returning to the dwelling of the young woman whose history and misfortunes had so much interested her. She succeeded in seeing her alone, for the elderly gentlewoman, imposing upon herself constant vigilance over her companion, was glad of so favourable an opportunity of getting out. Mary said her visit might be a long one, and the guardian left them very well satisfied.

In a case of this nature a difficulty is often felt in addressing the individual, and a hesitation caused, between the fear of crushing the already wounded heart, or of offering encouragement

where perhaps it might be ill-timed. Mary had considered this difficulty, but had made up her mind, as most persons would do, whose natural feelings strongly incline them to compassion, to address the unfortunate woman according to the impulse of her own heart. She had reflected much on the dealings of her heavenly Father with His sinful creatures, and saw nothing but promises of tenderness and mercy. She had also frequently had occasion to observe, in her intercourse with others, that kindness and forbearance generally gained attention, where other means had failed. It seemed to her that gentleness and sympathy were the only probable means of softening down the natural opposition of the mind, which was often wounded by receiving unsolicited advice or reproof. We are all so inclined to think well of ourselves, to make allowances for our own peculiar infirmities, and to take offence at any thing that wounds our self-approbation, that in addressing each other we might generally hope to attain our object far more effectually, if we would but remember that Scripture as well as observation confirm us in the fact, that self is the idol set up by all, various as may be the manner of worshipping it.

Acting upon this conviction, Mary addressed

her companion in words of kindness. The young woman never lifted her eyes, or made any answer, unless a positive question was put. She sat with her hands resting upon her work, which she had laid down on Mary's entrance. The latter attempted to draw her into conversation, but without success. She was answered by monosyllables, or in as few words as possible. Mary endeavoured to think of every thing that might excite any interest in her mind. She attempted to lay before her the gracious offers of salvation revealed in Scripture, in the hope that she might find them suited to her own peculiar state. But no interest seemed awakened. She spoke of the sufferings of the Saviour, His compassionate and willing reception of all who fled to Him; yet no impression was visible. "Do you not wish to have such a gracious Saviour for your friend?" said Mary. The young woman slowly raised her eyes, and looking at Mary, her lips appeared to move, but she said nothing :—

"Would you not like to feel that all your sins were pardoned, and that you were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ? I am sure you would,—do let me have the comfort of hearing you say so." Still there was a pause. "I am not here to sit in judgment on my fellow-

sinner, God forbid ! Pray believe that I came as your friend, and am only anxious to see you happy, and your soul washed from its pollution, and saved by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Will you not tell me why you are so silent and so reserved with me ? ”

The young woman fixing her eyes steadily on Mary's, exclaimed in a firm tone, bordering on despair, “ I cannot repent, and I cannot pray, and I cannot be saved till I do.”

Mary was shocked at her vehement manner, and the hopelessness of her look ; and tried to point out to her that Christ was “ exalted to give repentance.” She heard her with apparent attention, but seemed unable to receive it. So much had been said to her about the necessity of repenting of her sins, feeling their enormity, and forsaking them entirely, before she could hope to be received by the Saviour, that it appeared almost impossible to give her another impression. “ But,” said Mary, “ you would willingly repent ; and forsake and abhor your sins, if you could ; would you not ? ” She hesitated, and then answered, “ If I had the whole world to give away, I would give it, not to have fallen into the crime I have committed ; but it is done, and I cannot wash it out. I have sinned against God, and I have lost the esteem of all

my friends. I may have broken my Father's heart : and how can I talk of forsaking my sins ; they are already standing against me, and will never be forgotten." And again she resumed her look of silent despair.

Mary endeavoured to comfort her ; she told her that the crime which had disgraced her in the sight of her former friends had been no barrier to forgiveness in the case of Mary Magdalene, and of David. She readily caught at the first name, and said, " Ah, but Mary Magdalene repented bitterly of her sins, and she loved our Saviour, and watered His feet with her tears, and He forgave her her sins ; but I cannot repent as she did, and if I cry, my tears fall over my poor forsaken baby, and over its disgrace and mine ; but I dare not go to God with my sins, and my hard heart. He would not receive me, for He knows what wickedness is still cherished in my mind." Mary was distressed to see the poor unfortunate woman's emotion, and used every means to comfort her ; she explained to her that no sin, be its enormity what it might, was too great for God to forgive,—“ and, whatever your offences may have been, beware that you do not cherish and wilfully persist in that sin which is most offensive to God : I mean unbelief, and a refusal

of the Saviour whom He has provided. For every sin which is prohibited in the law of God is pardoned instantly, and remembered no more in condemnation, from the moment that the sinner is enabled to cast himself on Christ for salvation; but it is the peculiar sinfulness of unbelief, that it wilfully and obstinately refuses to look unto him and be saved. Therefore you must be contracting still heavier guilt, by not going to Him with all your sins, and trusting to Him to blot them out, than you had already incurred by the crime which weighs so heavily upon your mind."

"I wish I could believe this, but I cannot; besides, you don't know all the sin that lies at the bottom of my heart."

"But I know enough of the sin that lies in my own," said Mary, "and I bless God that He has said, 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;' for 'the blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin.' But what is the particular sin that presses upon your mind, besides the one we already know."

The young woman's face became very pale; she looked at Mary with great emotion, and then suddenly said,—“I will tell you all, for

I am certain you are a real friend, and will pity me, even though you must despise me in your heart. I cannot go over my wretched story, and you would not wish to hear it; but you know that I left my father's home and every friend I had in life, for the sake of one who promised me every thing, and left me friendless and destitute, a miserable worthless outcast! I ought to despise him, to abhor his very name, and to shut my heart from the recollection of him for ever. But here's my sin;—I can not forget him! I do despise his conduct, his heartless abandonment of me: I think him utterly lost to every honourable feeling, but still at times I cannot hate him: I cannot forget him. And how can I think of going to God with such wickedness in my heart! I dare not go."

Mary hastened to tell her that far from despising, she could feel nothing but the most intense pity; and "now tell me," she added, "why you dare not go with your sins to God, since we find from His word, that all sin is forgiven the moment we carry it to Christ?"

The unhappy woman asked how it was possible she could pray to be forgiven, while she was feeling what she had told her.

"That is the very reason why you should pray," said Mary, "we cannot put away our sins

ourselves: but do you indulge in those thoughts willingly?" She was assured not; on the contrary, the poor creature said it was her greatest grief, for if she did not, as she ought, fear offending God, still it made her doubly wretched to have such recollections in her unhappy situation.

"Then, my good friend, take comfort in the certainty, that if you can carry all your burdens to the Saviour, He will sustain you, He will free you from the power of temptation, or enable you to bear it. Remember that we have no power to avoid sin, or, when fallen, to rise again, but as we are strengthened by God; and when you feel tempted or distressed, go at once to Him, certain, that as He has promised to save all those who look unto Him, He will readily help them to escape from temptation, and preserve them from being overcome of evil. Never expect to get through any difficulty yourself,—never wait to conquer any sin, but go instantly with them to Him, and He will teach you what to do and how to act.

"I wish I could think this; I wish I could hope that I should ever be received and pardoned: I would not mind what I suffered or how long I waited,—for I have nothing now to care for,—if I could but think I should be saved at last."

“Why should you wait? and what can you expect to gain by it? you will never grow better, and never be more deserving of salvation than you are now. ‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.’ And wherein do you and I differ by nature?”

“Oh!” exclaimed the penitent, “don’t speak to me so—don’t tell me that I can ever be like you.” Mary explained to her the very great wickedness that was in every human heart by nature. She told her that all were equally guilty in the sight of God, but that He so ordered things that some were suffered to be kept out of the reach of such temptations as were most suited to the natural dispositions of their hearts; and consequently they appeared to stand, while others, beset by some overwhelming trial, and allowed to try their own strength, immediately fell.

“But do you not think,” asked the young woman, “that some are more easily led into evil than others? I am sure I once thought that it was impossible for a person of good principles to fall into sin. If I had been told two years ago, that I should be sitting here a forlorn, wicked, despised creature, ashamed to look any one in the face, I could not have believed it: but I suppose my heart was worse than others.”

“Not worse,” said Mary, “‘the imagination of *every* heart is *only evil continually*’ and we have many passages in God’s word assuring us how corrupt it naturally is. Jeremiah says, ‘the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.’ What strong expressions! —*above all things deceitful and desperately wicked!*”

“I am quite certain that mine is desperately wicked, or I should never have been brought into my present condition.”

“You think that, because you have transgressed the laws of God and man in one flagrant instance, therefore your heart must be more depraved than others; but you take up a false notion: your heart was equally deceitful, and equally corrupt, in the eyes of an all-searching and an holy God, before it inclined you to the commission of those crimes which condemn you in the judgment of yourself and of your fellow-creatures.”

The young woman looked surprised, and asked how this was possible, since no one could be charged with guilt before they had committed a crime.

“You had not, it is true, incurred the condemnation of man, but you must understand that the heart being, as scripture tells us, des-

perately wicked, and deceitful above all things, was prepared from its very nature to show its innate love of sin, the moment that it was acted upon. We are often misled by its deceitful pretensions, and are ready to conclude, that as appearances look well, nothing particular is amiss; whereas the seeds of all poisonous weeds lie buried in its cavities, prepared to take root and spring up, bearing every pernicious fruit, the moment that a favourable opportunity offers for their starting into life. God, who formed the heart originally, and made it fair and good, sees what is its present inclination, and knows exactly the evil that lies lurking within, and only waits temptation to draw it out into unrestrained and open depravity. He who 'putteth down one, and setteth up another,' and ruleth the whole universe by His almighty wisdom, can easily order all events by the most minute arrangement, so as to prevent disorder and confusion, and check the exercise of those passions which would quickly hurry the world into every excess of riot. If this were not the case, we should hourly witness the most lawless indulgence of every evil inclination; but as sovereign wisdom presides over all things, there is a restraint imposed by His secret counsel, which silently operates to the comfort of society and

the security of man. Yet this power is unacknowledged by sinful man, who thinks that by the aid of his reason, his virtues, or his good principles, he is enabled to go through life with credit to himself and comfort to his friends. Hence, when any one falls into some flagrant vice, he is accused of want of principle, and shunned by beings possessed of hearts moulded in precisely the same form, (for 'the heart of man answereth to man,') but secretly sustained from the dominion of that temptation which would, if allowed to assail, operate most effectually upon their natural constitution. They cannot see themselves as they are, therefore pass sentence according to their blind views of the supposed sufficiency of man."

The young woman seemed to listen attentively to all that was said, and asked Mary if it were necessary to believe that every human being was alike inclined to evil, "for," said she, "I cannot think that it is so; I cannot think that my father, who is one of the best men in the world, and remarkable for his upright conduct and good principles, is as much inclined to do what is evil as some of his neighbours, who are notorious for their cheating and bad conduct."

"No doubt, my good friend, his heart is formed after the very same pattern; but I do


make great distinctions among individuals; we know that means are allowed to produce great effects in what is called the forming of a character; and early example, early habits, and good instruction, are usually attended with success; but even these advantages are frequently known to fail, for we see the children of the best parents becoming a source of anxiety instead of a comfort to them."

This was an unanswerable appeal to the distressed daughter, who shed tears over the melancholy conviction; and Mary proceeded to show her the cause of all the evil that separated man from his Creator. She found her not altogether ignorant of the Scriptures, although very little acquainted with the nature of the gospel. She understood that man had been formed upright, and pronounced good when out of his Maker's hands; that he had been assailed by temptation, and overcome when in that state of purity. "Mark this," said Mary, "he was tempted *when in a state of purity*, and had not strength to resist, but fell! What then can we expect of him when he is no longer in the possession of a principle, which inclines him to choose the good and despise the evil? When he was in paradise he loved God, and his service was his delight; but it is not so now; since the fall every

heart chooses its own idols, but no one, of his *own propensity*, chooses God; it is against nature, it is contrary to all our natural inclinations, to love God. Scripture informs us that 'the natural mind is enmity against God,' so that we may be said to be totally incapable of possessing one right thought on the subject, and altogether unable to seek Him." "Unable to seek Him!" repeated the young woman, "am I then unable to seek Him?"

"In one sense you are, though I trust not in another. I have wished to show you, that as man in a perfect state could not stand, it is wholly impossible that in a state of imperfection and sin he should be able to shun vice and do good. I dare say you think, that had you done so and so, avoiding one temptation, and resisting another, you might have escaped the consequences of transgression, and humanly speaking, it might have been the case; but when we speak of inability to good, we mean disinclination. I have heard it well illustrated in this manner: we say, that it is impossible for a man to leap from the ground over a wall of thirty feet in height; here we mean that he is naturally unable—that the structure of his body renders it impossible. But, if we say that it is impossible for a miser to part with his

money, we mean that his habits and feelings render him incapable of an act of generosity ; the cause is different, but the result is similar. We have thus seen that man cannot, or will not serve God ; now let us see what must be the consequence of his rebellion. We have to bear in mind, that he was sent into the world for the express purpose of glorifying God, and rendering him due allegiance. He had but one service to perform ;—but one Master to obey. He had been furnished with a code of laws, which were adequate to instruct him in all that was necessary to the performance of his duty, and which might be summed up in one principle—love to God and man. He comes into the world, is taught those laws, thinks them too strict, is disinclined to obey them, thinks it impossible to keep them, doubts of their authenticity, resolves to throw off the yoke of allegiance, and choose another more suited to his carnal inclinations ; some annoying thoughts will cross his mind respecting the lawfulness of his determination, but a little more service in the camp of the enemy suffices to establish him in open rebellion. Meanwhile where is the eye of Omniscience ? On all that is done below, and ‘ over all His works.’ He sees the creatures of His own hand joining



the side of His enemies, and defying His authority; is it want of mercy to pass sentence on rebels like these?" Oh, no!" said her attentive companion, "we deserve no mercy." "Let us examine the laws of our own country," said Mary, "and see what is the sentence past on those who wilfully infringe them, perhaps but on one point:—say that a man has been a good and faithful subject to his king for thirty years of his life, acting with all honesty and fidelity during that period; but he is induced in the end to disregard his commands, and to violate the laws in some flagrant manner; he may have been guilty of murdering one of his fellow subjects: he is arraigned at the bar of justice, tried, found guilty and sentenced to pay the penalty which his crime deserved. The king's seal is affixed, and he dies, regretted perhaps by a few friends, but considered by none to have suffered unjustly. His example, his infringement of the laws, his contempt of authority, preclude all claim to mercy. An act of pardon in such a case would be thought weakness in a sovereign. And yet man expects that, at the hands of the Majesty of heaven, which he would deem weakness in an earthly potentate. Let it be remembered, also, that in the one case the offence is a single one, the only viola-

tion of the laws, but in the other a continuation of transgressions, a total disregard and contempt of every precept and injunction. Of course, in speaking thus strongly, we do not mean that all openly and constantly violate the commands of God, but that in the secret of every one's heart, there is no faithful service, no sincere love of Him, and no anxiety to study His will; and without this fidelity of heart-service there can be no religion at all.

"How then," asked the young woman, "can any one ever hope to be saved?"

"Ah! you may well ask this question! it is one that we cannot help dwelling on long after we have discovered the way that a God of infinite mercy has provided for those who believe in Him. I wish I may be enabled to make the subject clear to you, and that God would open your heart to understand it." Mary then tried to explain that God had from the creation of the world, chosen a people who should be called His. That this people originally were the Jews, whom God favoured above all nations on the earth, teaching them to worship Him, to believe in Him, and to fear Him.

"But," said her companion, "I have read a great deal about the Jews, and they seemed to me a very rebellious people, and always forget-

ting what miracles had been wrought for them."

"That is very true, and also a very faithful picture of the ingratitude and unbelief of God's children, up to this very day; but still the Jews, as I have said, were His chosen people, separated from other nations, and adopted by God, because it was His sovereign will, as He has Himself told us. They were taught to expect salvation through the Messiah, the blessed Saviour who came into this world to save all who believe in Him; they knew that by their own efforts the very best of them could never do any thing towards meriting the favour of God, and under this conviction they offered up continual sacrifices, typical of the great sacrifice which they looked for." As Mary proceeded she asked questions to ascertain how far the other comprehended what she heard, and finding that her understanding appeared very clear and quick, she went on to tell her that God had graciously adopted the Gentiles into His family, putting the same Spirit into their hearts, which enabled them to believe in Christ, and to trust in Him for their salvation. That as soon as they were taught by the Holy Spirit to go to Christ Jesus as the Saviour who had promised to redeem their souls, they imme-

diately became free from the sentence of death which had been past upon them for the transgression of the law." Here the young woman put her hand to her forehead as if to press in the conviction. "I will explain this more clearly," said Mary, "we will suppose a man cast into prison for a legal debt, who is fully convinced of the justice of the claim, but wholly incapable of paying it; he has no prospect before him but imprisonment for life, without a hope of escape. A rich man hears of his situation, and being touched with compassion, goes to the creditor, enquires the amount of the debt, and satisfies the demand. The prisoner is set free, and consequently hears no more of the claim; do you understand this? Take another case, say that a recruit, who unluckily entered the army without consideration, is very anxious to get his release; some generous friend applies to the commanding officer, and procures it for him. Is he not also free for the future? and is not a sailor who has his discharge from the service in his pocket free in like manner? Just so it is with the man or woman who is ransomed by the death of Christ. Christ agreed with Jehovah the Father to bear the sins of His people in His own person, and in that person, sustaining all their sins, and bearing



the journey of life. They think of His love, of his great and incredible compassion! they remember what they were, and how the sentence of eternal death hung over them. But it is cancelled, and they have nothing to fear—nothing to alarm them, but the dread of proving ungrateful to so gracious a Benefactor. Oh, what blessed happy creatures are they who can trust Him for every thing. You would like to have your sins pardoned, and your debts cancelled, would you not? And why should you not go to the Saviour, as Mary did, and lie at His feet, saying, ‘if I perish, I perish here!’”

The young woman seemed much moved, and Mary, finding it late, took leave, promising to return again shortly, which the other strongly urged.

CHAPTER XII.

‘AS IN WATER FACE ANSWERETH TO FACE ; SO THE HEART OF MAN TO MAN.’—Prov. xxvii. 19.

‘I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE UNTO YOU ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD.’—Acts xx. 27.

Mrs. HARDING, to whom Mary related the substance of the preceding conversation, was very much interested in the relation ; but she objected to the practice of telling people who had been guilty of more than ordinary transgression, that sin was alike spread over every individual. She thought it injudicious, as it tended to lower the sense of guilt. Mary asked how it was possible to give a right impression of the entire corruption of the human heart, without showing that, in absolute, inherent guilt, every one was on a footing with his neighbour. “I think,” said Mrs. Harding, “that there are some things which peculiar cases render it advisable to keep in the back-

ground ; and I should hesitate about bringing forward this doctrine, because I think it might lead a person in her situation to imagine, that if human nature were actually so prone to evil, and every one alike subject to fall, then her crime was not very heinous. Now, although we know and feel that we are all very sinful, and apt to run into every kind of temptation, yet I certainly think that there is a difference : that some do not willingly incur the displeasure of God, after they know what real religion is ; and, therefore, I should be for making a distinction. I would urge strongly the terrible nature of sin and its dreadful consequences, so as to excite feelings of contrition in the mind ; I would point out what the holy law of God requires, and let her see the dreadful punishment that must await the sinner, unless he heartily repents of his sins, and desires to forsake them."

"Allow me, my dear Mrs. Harding, to remark upon your plan of keeping back the doctrine of natural depravity. I have heard many wise and excellent persons take the same view, but I think I have Scripture on my side, for maintaining the opposite ground. Do you not think that we are too apt to bring in the light of our own reason as a guide, instead of going to the word of God, and seeing what it

says? I have no doubt that your way seems very plausible, and according to your judgment quite expedient; but as I read them, the whole of the sacred writings go to establish the doctrine you think it most judicious to avoid; and if this be the case, can we be authorised in setting aside the plan laid down there, in order to substitute one of our own, which appears to our blind views better calculated to attain the desired effect?"

Mrs. Harding paused a little, and said if she were persuaded that it was right to act differently from the plan she had adopted, she would immediately do so, but that she must think more on the subject. Mary pointed out to her several passages of Scripture which established the point in her mind. Mrs. Harding turned them down to consider at leisure. "I must just say another word," said Mary, "for I cannot see that I should have done right in taking your plan with regard to the poor young creature's unfortunate fall; I think that had I dwelt strongly on that subject, it would have rather hardened her, than excited keener feelings of remorse."

"Oh, my dear Mary, if she already felt sincerely penitent and humbled, I would by no means have urged it."

“I can’t say that I thought her exactly so :—humbled she was, for the circumstances of her situation to a person of her proud and naturally honourable feelings would be sufficient to humble her ; but I saw she was already too much crushed to bear further humiliation ; and I thought the only hope, humanly speaking, was to try and raise her ; and for this purpose I wished to set before her a full and gracious Gospel, ‘the glad tidings of great joy,’ as they are so truly termed. A prospect of happiness, or even a glimpse of rest and peace, to a mind overwhelmed with many sorrows, seems the only thing likely to excite any interest. I had remarked that our blessed Lord, in the case of the guilty woman who was brought in for His condemnation, made no severe reflections ; ‘Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more ;’ and when the weeping Mary stood at his feet, and the moral Simon censured His reception of the sinner, He delivered that striking parable of the debtors, and immediately turning to the woman, said unto her, ‘Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace.’ Impressed with this recollection, I wished, if it might please God, to show her the compassion and kindness of the Saviour, in the hope that having made shipwreck of all her

earthly prospects, she might cling to the only hope of peace that now remained, and I do think there was some feeling of interest awakened in her bosom. I think she wished it were possible she could believe that Christ would receive her, and pardon all her sins."

"But don't you think, my dear Mary, that people are often willing to have their sins pardoned, before they are desirous of parting with them altogether? I should be very much afraid of holding out offers of pardon and reconciliation before I saw some evidences of real repentance, and some fruits of the sincerity of their profession."

"I think that we have no more power to feel truly sorry for sin, or to repent of it in the way that God requires, than we have to believe in Christ, without the influence of the Holy Spirit. I know that it is very possible to be sorry for the consequences of sin, and to feel shame and vexation, and a desire to forsake it, and to be restored to the good opinion of the world and of one's self; and also to feel afraid of the just vengeance of God, and a wish to propitiate His favour: but to feel grieved for sin as committed against a gracious and tender Father, is utterly beyond nature, and therefore we are told that 'Christ is exalted to *give repentance* and remis-

sion of sins ;' and it is said that God will take away from us the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh : implying that our hearts are too hard to understand any thing of Him, or to enter into His service, and therefore before we can stir one step towards it, we must have the new heart given to us, after which we may look for the evidences and the fruits. For as we are said to be trees of the Lord's planting, surely we require to be first planted, before we can bring forth fruit ! Our Lord says, 'without me ye can do nothing ;' and 'as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' Consequently before we expect to see any growth, we must see the branches abiding in the vine. The sinner must go to Christ for salvation, or rather he must first be led there, (for 'no man can come unto me except the Father draw him,') and when he is there, trusting in Christ Jesus, he may confidently expect to be yielding evidences, or as the same parable expresses it, when he is abiding in Him, he shall bring forth much fruit. I find many people expect the fruits before they see the plant rooted ; now we do not act so unwisely in respect to natural objects, from whence the similies are borrowed ;

we plant a tree in the ground, and look to see if it has taken firm root; and when this is the case, we expect the fruit: but not when the tree is lying out of the ground, ready to wither for want of proper planting: We know that it must be well rooted first: And how can a barren, lifeless, dead mass of matter give itself life, and heat, and motion? Surely God alone can quicken such a body; as He did the Ephesians of old, to whom the Apostle writes thus: 'And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' 'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.' With this clear scriptural view, it is not possible to go far wrong, and my wish was (as I have said before) to show the sinner, that if she could believe in the Lord Jesus, she would have all her sins forgiven, be received into His favour, have 'the best robe' brought out, and be taught to walk so circumspectly, that all should see what a change had been wrought, and what fruits those trees could yield, which were of the Lord's own planting."

Mary found that her arguments made but slight impression on Mrs. Harding, who calcu-

lated and pondered over every idea, and could not give up the notion, that repentance, and mortification, and other fruits of the Spirit, were absolutely necessary to be manifested before the sinner could presume to go boldly to the Saviour, imploring forgiveness and reception into His favour.

The conversation ended here, and the same day they received letters hastening their return. Mary regretted leaving, on account of the young woman; she saw her for a short time before she set out on her journey, and was much gratified to find her more composed, and apparently more cheerful. She had written out the substance of their conversation, and with so much correctness, that Mary was quite surprised. She took leave of her with real sorrow, and exhorted her to read her Bible diligently, searching for the Saviour in all she read. She urged her to look to Him in confidence—to trust Him, and not to fear. The poor young woman promised faithfully to try and follow her advice, and her countenance bore full testimony to the words she uttered.

Mr. Conroy and his niece having arranged to stop for a day or two at Mr. Harding's

on their return towards home, lost no time in setting out for the residence of Mary's brother, which was more than one day's journey from the place where they now were.

CHAPTER XIII.

‘THE PREACHER SOUGHT TO FIND OUT ACCEPTABLE WORDS.’

Eccl. xii. 10.

MARY’S brother had been expecting them, and met the carriage as it drove up the lane leading towards his parsonage. He was delighted to see Mary, who was his favourite sister, and welcomed his uncle with all the pleasure and satisfaction which is naturally felt on receiving a person, to whom you are much indebted, for the first time into your own house.

Mr. Conroy was all animation : he was fond of his nephew ; had placed him in the living ; had anticipated the happiness of seeing him comfortably settled there, and now talked about his house, his parish, and his affairs, with the interest of a party concerned. Mary began inspecting the house and furniture. “ Henry, this is an uncommonly pretty place, how pleased mamma will be to visit you here ! your drawing-room, though, wants a sofa, for comfort.” “ A

sofa!" said her uncle, "what does he want with a sofa?—clergymen should not be lazy. I don't like to see a fat parson; one always fancies him eating good dinners, liking good wines, and lolling in an easy chair; pray don't be putting luxurious ideas into the young divine's head." Her brother Henry laughed, and said he had no occasion for a sofa, the room did extremely well, and he was quite satisfied with it. "What a pretty view you have from this window, those hills are beautiful." "Rather barren, Mary, but I mean to plant in that hollow, which will give a more wooded look to my prospect." "Is that your garden?" "Yes, but it is not yet in good cultivation." "Have you much pleasure-ground?" "Not much, but enough to make it very pleasant, if you are not tired we can walk out." Mr. Conroy and Mary followed him into the shrubbery, there they had a dissertation on shrubs and plants, which had been a favourite study of the uncle's. "You want a good stock from the nursery ground to fill up these gaps, my boy (a mode of addressing the nephew which he continued from habit, although Mary's brother was nearly thirty years of age). "Yes, I shall fill them up next year probably, I have other demands upon my purse just now, which must be

attended to." "I hope, Henry, you don't begin by maintaining all the sick and destitute of your parish, for it is a bad example to set; the parish should look to its own poor; besides, you'll be marrying by and by, and then, believe me, my boy, you'll have enough to do with your money." Henry smiled, and replied that he had no such thought at present. "Well, we'll talk of this some other time, for I've a good deal to say to you, and I am not so old but I can take an interest in young people's feelings. Eh! Mary," he added, looking very archly towards his niece, who took no notice that she heard him, "Henry, who officiates in your establishment?" "I have an elderly spinster, a Miss Jenny Dobbins, who is willing and able to undertake all the duties of my household; she has been fully engaged this day in making all proper arrangements for your reception: airing rooms, baking cakes, and I believe ornamenting her Sunday cap to make a due impression on my uncle's servant."

This history was scarcely given when Jenny herself appeared, looking very important and happy, as the sole agent on whom devolved the numerous offices of cook, housemaid, housekeeper, &c. &c. She came to announce that tea and coffee were served up.

"Are you not sometimes dull, living so much alone, Henry?"

"Oh no! never dull; I do better than most people living alone. I am very much engaged with my parish duties, and when I come home I have my sermons to make, and my studies to pursue."

"Don't you want some relaxation?"

"Surely, Mary, you remember me well enough, to know that exercise, reading, and writing, are quite sufficient for my amusement: give me books, pen, ink, and paper, and I am quite happy, but these I must have. I don't care about society, though perhaps I enjoy it rather more than I used, for I understand it better. I used to feel that it was unprofitable, but I have taken another view of it. I see it as a means of drawing you out of self, and placing you in the way of usefulness; or at least, if this is not true in my case, it is a hope which I may entertain without danger of its doing me much injury."

"Then you are quite happy sitting here, making and drinking your own tea, and passing your long evenings all alone?"

"The first difficulty I obviate, Mary, by choosing coffee in preference, which old Jenny makes and sends in to me; the second suits

very well, for my character inclines me to like solitude and quiet: perhaps a love of ease, and of undisturbed comfort may have something to do with it."

"Two as unlovely qualities as I know of, in a young man, and the sooner my nephew gets rid of them the better; they lead to nothing but selfishness, the worst vice, in my mind, which can lay hold of any one, more especially a Christian minister."

The colour rose slightly on the nephew's cheek, for he was by nature proud and impatient of reproof, but it passed away in a moment, for a stronger feeling in his character was, a disposition to take every thing in life quietly, which added to his affection for his uncle, easily enabled him to bear with good humour the satire or the censure of his remarks. Mary enquired the rules of the house, and how her brother disposed of his hours. She was answered, that as for rules, he had neither at school, nor at college, kept more than absolutely necessary, and in his own house he had avoided making any, save that his hours were usually ten o'clock for reading and prayers, eleven for going to bed, six or seven for rising in the morning, and eight for prayers and breakfast.

About ten o'clock the bell was rung, and

Jenny took her seat with James, while a chapter was read, and a short exposition given in plain and clear language. After they had withdrawn Mr. Conroy expressed his pleasure at seeing his nephew officiating in his own house as the spiritual teacher. "I should be nervous about you next Sunday, if I had not heard you go on so composedly just now." Henry smiled, for he was conscious of possessing very little natural strength of nerve; but he had acquired a calm self-possessed manner which acted upon the generality of observers as the effect of real confidence, and self-command.

The next day was Saturday: Mary was stirring at an early hour, and found her brother up, and out; she followed him into the shrubbery, where he was walking up and down composing his sermon, as he told her. She asked if it took him long to make.

"According to circumstances, sometimes it seems all written in my mind, so that I have only to try and make my pen go as fast as it will; at others I feel perplexed even to select a text, and when I have chosen one, I can make but very little of it; yet occasionally I find that it pleases God to make those sermons most useful, which have cost me most labour and uneasiness."

“A very striking proof, Henry, that the work is not of man. I have often thought that the office of a minister of the gospel must be a very blessed one. You must feel so peculiarly under the guidance and teaching of God. You know that others look up to you for spiritual knowledge, and you know equally well, that unless God condescends to water and bless, there will be no increase. I think you must feel your dependence so powerfully, that it must excite faith in a very enviable degree.”

Her brother sighed, and acknowledged it should do so; but added, “We are apt to trust too much to human influence, and human exertion, and so deaden that feeling of powerlessness and dependence which should quicken our faith, and increase our diligence.”

“Have you reason to think, Henry, that your labours here have been attended with success?”

“I hardly know, Mary, I have been so short a time among my people, and as yet am not sufficiently acquainted with them to judge; but I hope some good has been done by me, and I trust that God will bless my endeavours. I find some comfort in a few instances, and I think more observance of the Sunday among the people in general. Our Sunday school increases, and the children, who are still uncouth and wild

enough, are brought into a little more order and discipline. I have an adult school consisting of seven or eight most awkward lads, whom I find it somewhat difficult to instruct; but I suppose I shall become more experienced, and they more apt."

"What weekly engagements have you?"

"They come to me once in the week, generally on Tuesday evening; on Thursday I have a lecture in the church, and on Friday I meet a few of the old people at the workhouse."

"You were not there yesterday evening."

"No, I had it in the morning, which I prefer, if I can make it suit my friends. I wish to husband my strength, and I have an idea that the going to bed exhausted is apt to cause restlessness; whereas fatigue, in the early part of the day, is easily overcome, not that I should naturally think of my long or short life, I never had an idea of its duration as many have, nevertheless I am desirous of taking all lawful care of it, that I may use it while it is prolonged in my Master's service. I think we are responsible for neglect of our health, and by no means justified in losing it carelessly; but it is hardly right for me to judge in the case of others, who, from more zeal and ardour in the cause, quickly wear out their strength:

my constitution, I am afraid, rather inclines me to go on quietly and take things easily ; a propensity," he added, "which my uncle strongly deprecates, and I believe with justice."

When the morning-reading and breakfast were over, Mr. Conroy proposed going over to the neighbouring town, which was only a few miles distant, and taking Mary with him, as her brother was engaged. His first visit was to the nursery ground, where he ordered to the parsonage a sufficient supply of shrubs and plants to stock all the barren spots. His next commission was at the upholsterer's, where he chose a sofa for the drawing room, and the identical easy chair which he had so much abused. Mary was much amused with this purchase. "I buy this chair, Mary, for my own comfort when I am an old man, and go to Henry for a little spiritual consolation ; the sofa I get for your good mother when she comes to visit her son ; those frames I ordered to please your brother himself, I know he would grudge laying out money on useless ornaments, and I think he would like to have those drawings hung up which we got for him in town. He may want some new books, but these I can order any day when I ascertain what they are." Mr. Conroy made several inquiries of persons whom

he met, accidentally, about his nephew, and was gratified to hear him spoken of with respect and esteem.

Sunday arrived, and about eleven o'clock Mr. Conroy and Mary entered the church. The congregation was apparently attentive. "Henry's voice fills the church well, Mary," said the uncle, about the middle of the second lesson: the rest of his observations he kept to himself till the sermon commenced. "An admirable text!" ('Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.') "I hope he will handle it well!" Mary hoped so most sincerely, but she listened with a degree of uneasiness, for she knew that her brother's sentiments and her's did not quite accord on some points.

The sermon was preached with solemnity and as much earnestness as could well be thrown into the manner where the whole is written, and the eye has constantly to refer to the reading. "Henry preaches well, Mary! he goes through his matter with uncommon clearness of argument; that's a sermon which would strike many people. I like his easy quiet manner, I think he would be quite excellent if he could preach without his paper, but that some people object to; I must say, I never could

fancy the apostles writing down and reading off their discourses; I think if the head and heart are well exercised in the business, a man impresses more by the matter appearing to flow immediately from his own feelings, than from his paper. I had no idea Henry would be so self-possessed, he used to be nervous as a boy—are you not delighted with your brother?"

"I think his manner particularly good, and his voice excellent," said Mary. "Well! but what of the subject! not quite orthodox, according to your views, I suspect. Ah! I'm no judge, and if I was, the boy pleased me so much altogether that I had no ears for criticism."

Mr. Conroy met his nephew with open arms. "Well! my boy, that sermon of your's ought to have done good, for I am sure you took pains with it, and if every one in the church listened to you with half the pleasure that I did, they might reap some benefit in the end; I was glad to see you so much at your ease, neither too studied nor too careless, and your voice not a bad one; don't grow conceited, my boy, that's what you have to guard against; but I have somewhat to say to you upon this head when we are alone and have full leisure. So you don't give us a cold dinner, that's well! I don't care for the sake of eating, but I can't bear to

see a man who has preached well sit down to a cold mutton bone without vegetable or any thing to make it palatable ; some one must stay in the house to keep out robbers, and I always think they may as well put on a pot and boil a pudding or some potatoes, as sit with their hands before them." Henry said he cared little what dinner he had, he feared many a better man sat down after a hard day's work with no meat at all. Some persons objected to any sort of cooking going on on a Sunday, but he could see no reason against vegetables or meat boiling, provided they were of such a kind as required little or no attention. " Old Jenny," he added, " tells me she shells peas and peels apples with a book before her, therefore I can't accuse her of wasting her time, I wished her to have as much leisure as possible on the Sunday, but she insists on my having what she calls a comfortable dinner ; and as it does not interfere with her better interests, I allow her to have her own way."

"How does she manage about going to church?" asked Mary.

"She goes in the afternoon to our service, and in the evening to Belfont, where there is an Independent chapel."

"Oh ! Oh !" said Mr. Conroy ; " what—do

you allow of encouraging dissenters ? a churchman, and let your household attend dissenting chapels !”

The nephew replied, that though a member of the establishment, and bound by his profession and his inclinations to support its authority, he was far from considering it right to restrain any one from going where they thought they could be benefited.

“But do you not think it inconsistent with your calling ?”

“Inconsistent ! no, by no means ; I hope I should only consider that inconsistent which appeared to militate against the advancement of religion ; whatever tends in any way to promote the cause, however the means may be despised or ridiculed by the ignorant or prejudiced, I trust I shall always know how to appreciate and respect.”

“That’s well said, Henry, and I admire your liberal notions ; there’s nothing shows the narrow and little mind like vulgar prejudices against another party, because they don’t happen in all points to conform to our peculiar views. I always say, show me a man of a superior turn of mind, a man of generous and enlarged sentiments, and you’ll find a greatness of feeling (if I may so call it) which raises him above

those little, mean distinctions. It is the man of a narrow and contracted mind that is unable to shake off these prejudices: he knows that his mother, his nurse, or his tutor, told him that this particular body of individuals, or that class of persons, were to be avoided and despised; he grows up with those opinions, hears others as ignorant of real facts as himself advance like ideas, and becomes bigotted in his errors, and rooted in his aversions. There is no teaching such a man; he may pretend to discuss the point fairly with you, but he is like the old Scotch advocate replying to the assertion of another, that it was impossible to send conviction to his mind—‘Yes, I’ll be convinced, but show me the man who can convince me.’ I am not intending to advocate the cause of the Dissenters; I inherited and was educated in church principles, and therefore prefer the establishment greatly, as I perhaps might have preferred the other mode of worship, had the case been the other way; but I respect them equally, and could, I hope, discover merit in the sermon of a clever dissenter as well as in that of a clever churchman.”

Mary thought that the education and society enjoyed by the latter gave them an advantage over the other party.

"Yes, of course, there is something to be said for the rank in life which a man holds; I allow that this must influence his manner; but I have seen men of very cultivated minds and great information among the dissenters; men of such intellectual powers, that if any thing was perceptible in their manner, you lost sight of it from their talent and education. You may wonder how I happen to know any thing of them; I'll tell you;—One of the farmers on my estate was a dissenter, and I found him so intelligent, so well informed, and so sensible a man, that I used frequently to seek his society; from him I learnt something of the body, and being desirous of acquainting myself with facts on every subject in which I am interested, I often went to hear their preachers, and was so well satisfied that I have never since made any invidious comparisons between church and chapel."

"We have many prejudices," said the nephew, "which we cannot expect to be removed at once; I must confess, that my opinions on the subject you have been discussing, are not quite so liberal as yours. I certainly never was at a dissenting place of worship, and therefore cannot judge, but I had an idea that their style of preaching was more adapted to the lower

orders than to any other; and consequently, I saw no reason why an objection should be made to their going at a time when there was no service in the Church."

"No, Henry, and I should add further, no objection to their going at all times, provided they found the dissenter's teaching more beneficial than the churchman's."

"But don't you think there may be instances where it would be well to know that the instruction they had, was really sound and useful?"

"Certainly, and for that purpose I would go myself and hear." The nephew made no reply. "If I could not go myself," said the uncle, smiling, "I would make all possible inquiry, and ascertain how far dependence was to be placed on the fitness of the minister; if I found he was a man of sincerity, wisdom, and conduct, I would restrain no one from going; if, on the contrary, I had reason to suspect that his character and principles were at variance, as (without disparaging from the honour of your cloth) is sometimes the case among the clergy, I would do all in my power to dissuade my people from attending him."

"There are so many classes of dissenters,"

said the nephew, "that it requires caution how you act."—"Ah! but you will of course understand, that I am only upholding the superior order: the Independents, for example, whose mode of worship and church government are so much like the Scotch and Swiss Churches; their preachers are generally men of education, at least they are expected to be so, for they have a college for their young students, and opportunities of improvement. I must say, I think our church less careful in the particular of forming its young divines for preachers, than they. I am told they bestow great pains and labour to acquire the art of sermon-making and preaching with success; and I have been astonished to find very young men (quite lads) experienced in this branch, and capable of composing and delivering a discourse with considerable facility and talent. You will find six out of seven among the clergy, unless they are men of much piety, make themselves very happy with another man's sermon, and give themselves no concern about composing their own discourses, or endeavouring to acquire the power."

The bells were ringing for afternoon service and the conversation was interrupted. In the Psalms for the evening was the cxvith, and the

text was taken from those striking words in the 16th verse, 'O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.'—Mary's heart had read the words with rejoicing, and she listened eagerly for the remarks her brother was about to make. He took the Psalmist's declaration, 'I am thy servant,' and explained the nature of the service: the qualifications required for that service: the willingness of the subject to undertake all the duties, and to undergo all the privations attendant upon it, together with the conviction, that once entered upon, it would be required of him to continue faithful to his allegiance till death had annulled the contract, by substituting a better and an unending one. In this part of the subject, Mary thought he said too much of man's capability of performing what was exacted, and gave him more power than appeared to her justified from scripture, or from the experience of the human heart. She felt the discourse to be a very discouraging one, and when the last clause was brought forward, 'Thou hast loosed my bonds,' it seemed to her as if the cords were drawn tighter, and the bondage rendered more complete. She looked around her, and saw some faces evidently in-

terested, and apparently comforted by the sermon. 'The Lord has various ways of leading his people,' she thought, but I cannot see how believers are to be built up by this; nor how sinners are to be brought in! Yet we are told that 'the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ,' it may be so here! but for a soul once resting on him, there is nothing to feed upon in this. Perhaps my brother may be sent to show them what the spiritual law requires—and yet the ministers of the gospel were enjoined to *preach Christ*. How can it be? he certainly appears taught of God, and led by his Spirit, or how could he understand as he does; and how could he be willing to devote his life as I know he wishes to do, to the service of God?—I have heard of two or three to whom his ministry has been made savingly useful. Surely then, a blessing must accompany him; and if so, he must be under God's teaching; then, if under God's teaching, why should he preach in a way that proves the existence of much darkness? I cannot understand it!—If he reads the scriptures and studies them diligently, he must be enlightened, for 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

The idea then struck her that he might be engrossed with other studies, and, although not

absorbed by them to the neglect of the word of God, yet so occupied by human authors, that his views remained clouded, and his ideas obscure.

She felt it a very delicate point to open her mind to him, but, nevertheless, determined on doing so the first favourable opportunity. Her brother was some years older than herself, and was supposed to have more experience, more knowledge of life; but Mary considered that 'God had chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise,' and she felt that if *He* had taught her the truth more fully, it would be sinful and wrong to allow any scrupulous feelings of false delicacy to prevent her from speaking faithfully and unreservedly to her brother. The business was besides less difficult than it might have been in many cases, for her brother was extremely fond of her and would always listen good-humouredly to any of her remonstrances.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘EVERY ONE THAT USETH MILK IS UNSKILFUL IN THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: FOR HE IS A BABE.’—Heb. v. 13.

‘A MAN CAN RECEIVE NOTHING, EXCEPT IT BE GIVEN HIM FROM HEAVEN.’—John iii. 27.

BEFORE breakfast, on the following Monday, Mary found her brother in the grounds, and thinking it a fit moment for beginning the conversation, she made some remarks upon the church and the number of the hearers; she thought they appeared attentive and interested during the sermon. He smiled, and said with much diffidence, that it was his sincere desire to think only of what might benefit, and not of what might attract. “It was the natural bent of my disposition,” he added, “to feel a secret wish that my preaching might render me popular; or perhaps I shall better state the feeling by saying, my heart coveted that sort of regard,

and estimation, which would ensure me the best affections of such characters as I valued. I do not think I quite understood myself. I used to fancy that my indifference for what the multitude thought, or what they felt in regard to myself, as an individual, amounted almost to a sin ; indifference to the opinion of others appeared to me the very vice of my constitution : I was willing to allow that I cared for the affections of some, but I disclaimed all solicitude for what the general opinion might be. I have since found, on a closer inspection of myself, that vanity and pride mingled together in a most curious manner in my composition, and that I was unconsciously elated by the conviction of being able to secure approbation ; and therefore fancied I was indifferent to the result ; whereas had I seen the opposite effect on peoples' minds, I should probably have been annoyed in proportion to my fancied disregard of their sentiments. I see now that my whole view of the subject was a wrong one, and I am so anxious to lose all recollection of self in the duties of my office, that I endeavour to preach in the least agreeable manner to human pride. I try to make my discourses meet the humblest capacity, and wish to forget that I have any hearers but the poor, the unlearned, and the

uncriticising ; in this way I hope to subdue the risings of my old enemy, and I trust, through God's blessing, to reach the heart of the sinner and humble seeker."

Mary was much pleased with her brother's ingenuous confession, and his exemplary endeavours to exercise self-denial on a point so difficult; she felt him rise in her esteem, and stood before him undecided in her resolution: had he appeared anxious to receive her praise, or to ask what others thought of his abilities, she fancied she could easily have introduced her sentiments, but his humility and evident wish to abase self, made her feel quite uncomfortable:—was she to avoid wounding him by keeping back the subject, or was she to consider it as the cause of God, and enter upon it, leaving the result to Him, without weighing the consequences? The latter appeared to her the right choice, and repeating over the text, she said, "Henry, will you be angry with me if I say that I could not very much like your afternoon's sermon." He asked what parts of it she found fault with. "The whole." "The whole!" he repeated, and laughed aloud, "why that's condemning me in toto indeed." "Yes, Henry, I cannot think your doctrines sound." "Not sound," said he, still more

surprised, " why, Mary, what can you mean ? " " I mean that I do not think you took a very clear view of your subject before you committed it to paper ; I think that you said a great deal too much about the creature, and too little of the Saviour ; you made out that man had the power to enter into the service of God if he chose, and yet our Lord says, ' No man can come unto me except the Father draw him ; ' and that he had the ability to act faithfully and conscientiously in that service if he would ; also, that when under that allegiance he might persevere in his fidelity to the end, or he might fall away from it according as his own inclination led him. Now I cannot find any of these views justified from Scripture. It appears to me that man cannot be said to have any power to enter into the service of God, since it is well known that all his inclinations lead him to prefer any other service rather than God's ; and if our inclinations urge us powerfully one particular way, it must be some power superior to any we possess in ourselves, that can impel us to choose an opposite path—a path, which, to the natural man, has neither attractions to allure, nor the plea of necessity to enforce. Again, I don't think you stated with sufficient force, that, although grace was promised and strength given to the believer

to enable him to walk faithfully and uprightly, there was in the creature no actual ability to think or to do any thing good of himself. Neither can I understand how you could advance that man had the power to continue in the service, or to throw off the yoke at pleasure ! are we not told, and do we not know by personal experience, that not only should we never have chosen God, had He not chosen us, but that such is the natural enmity of the human heart, that we should be casting aside our allegiance every moment, were it not for the power of restraining grace and Almighty love ? Next followed your remarks upon the close, 'Thou hast loosed my bonds asunder ;' and you will forgive me if I say that you left your hearers under a bondage more galling than ever the Israelites bore under the ceremonial law. You gave them a perfect Sinai view of the service required, softening it indeed by assurances of its pleasantness, but imposing a severity of discipline and a strictness of obedience to be wrought out by a helpless impotent worm, which the well-meaning but powerless creature would find impossible to keep. Certainly you did hold out some of the comfort of the gospel, but indeed my dear brother, it was so mixed with hard and grievous conditions, that I can

imagine no one quitting the church rejoicing in the Lord, as we are exhorted to do, or thinking the gospel 'glad tidings of great joy.' I am annoyed, Henry, at saying all this to you, and I shall be very much pained if I have wounded you or given any unnecessary offence, but it has been on my conscience to tell you all my thoughts, and I could not have been happy after hearing you, and feeling as I did yesterday, without speaking unreservedly."

Her brother looked uncomfortable, but assured her he never could take any thing amiss from her, and must always feel that what she said proceeded from a kind motive; "Nevertheless," he added, "I must justify myself from some of your accusations:—and to take up the points as you have done, I shall observe, that although I do not hold that man has naturally the ability to seek God, and to enter into His service, yet I think that salvation is offered to every one, and that the aid of the Spirit is given to all who ask it."

"Do you think, Henry, that (supposing this to be the case) man has the power to accept the offers you speak of? or do you not think that his moral inability since the fall renders those offers of no avail, if not accompanied by the quickening power of the Spirit of God? How can a man,

palsied in all his limbs, stretch out his hands to receive a gift, unless the malady be first removed?"

Her brother replied, that this might be true enough in point of fact, but that it would be unwise and improper to bring forward such a doctrine without extreme caution, as it would at once destroy the belief of free-agency, and become a plea in the hands of the ignorant for continuing in their natural state of sin and alienation.

"Then, Henry, do you think that because some doctrines are liable to be misconstrued, God's ministers are therefore at liberty to keep them back, or to soften them down to man's opinion? Surely the Apostles never acted upon this principle; they bring them forward as the ground, the foundation of all the fabric, without stopping to consider what will be palatable to man's vitiated taste. I cannot but think that the withholding of any of God's declarations to man must be extremely offensive to the majesty of heaven; it seems like dictating to him what is best to do, and choosing for ourselves what we think will most answer the end intended. If the Bible clearly maintains certain doctrines, can you think yourself justified in concealing or cautiously withholding them?"

“I think that we are allowed the free use of our judgments, and if I find that by bringing forward some doctrines, which are not actually required to be believed for salvation, I destroy the peace of many, and impede the progress of others, I should consider myself justified in avoiding them in future.”

“Well, Henry, I must think you have formed your opinions more from human authority than from the word of God ; we are constantly taught there that the natural mind is enmity to God, that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them who will not believe ; why then should we be surprised or discouraged from preaching ALL that is contained therein, because we find the very effects which we are warned to expect. It is written ‘woe unto you when all men speak well of you ;’ yet you will find that a cautious, well guarded, refined gospel will bring no evil name on the preacher, in these days ; and why ? because it so smooths down the offence of the cross, that no offence is taken. But what are the consequences ? a deadness and barrenness among Christians, a spirit of worldliness, indifference, and coldness towards each other ; how little there is of that warm animating zeal which shows itself in love to God, and affection for his people ! you must have observed this, Henry ?”

“ Indeed I am forced to lament that this is so much the case, but I attribute it to want of diligence in Christians ; to want of self-denial ; to the absence of those feelings which tend to draw out the heart towards God, and towards man. I have been considering the subject much of late, and with a view to excite the people here to increased exertion in all the appointed means, as also to kindle in my own mind stronger feelings of devotion, I have been preparing some sermons on the strict observance of all the moral precepts, for I think we fail more from neglecting duties, than from studying doctrines which often only serve as a plea for passing over more important points.”

“ Ah, Henry, Henry ! ” said Mary, interrupting him, “ do not think it presumption in me, but be assured you begin at the wrong end ; any subject that begins and ends in man must be altogether bad. What did the Israelites make of their duties ? and yet the law was for ever rung in their ears : Were they not in a constant state of rebellion ? Why would you lay a ‘ yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.’ ‘ Whosoever is justified by the law is fallen from grace ; ’ why would you wish them to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage ? why preach duties which man is

incapable of fulfilling? The exhortation is, 'preach Christ;' and be assured whenever this command is faithfully obeyed, there will be an immediate increase of spiritual life; there will be a readiness to perform all duties with alacrity and joy; a desire to use all means of glorifying so gracious a master; a humbleness of mind arising from a sense of deep inward corruption, and a joy and gratitude of heart for redemption secured to beings so undeserving. These are the natural results of a full and faithful gospel, offered 'without money and without price.'"

Mary's brother objected, that although the gospel was offered without price, still there were certain conditions on which the offer was made. She urged that where conditions were required, it was no longer a free gift, but a sort of bargain purchased by some sacrifice on the one hand, and made over on the other, under certain requirements.

"Suppose, Mary, I give you this book, under the idea of your keeping it, and not giving it away to any one; this arrangement could hardly be supposed to do away with its being a free gift; just so appears to me the tender of the gospel, it requires no conditions in return, but that those who accept it should fulfil, as far as they are

enabled, the commands which evidence their being under a peculiar charter."

"I must just tell you, Henry, that I neither admit the illustration nor the theory, for I should not consider your gift entirely a free one if I was restricted by any injunctions in accepting it. I might be glad to take it on these easy terms, but I would rather have it without any at all. Now, with regard to the gospel, I cannot find any scriptural ground for saying that God requires of the sinner any terms whatever ; on the contrary, he is represented as a dead man, and how can a dead body rise to life, and act obedience without the breath of life being first breathed into his nostrils by his Maker ? We are said to be saved 'by grace, not of works ;' and if by grace, what share has man in the affair ? we know that grace is no part of his natural being ; it is God's gift, and bestowed on the sinner when he is in darkness, ignorance, and helplessness ; when he is in a state which renders him incapable of thinking, far less of doing, any thing to please God. In the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel we have a full and clear description of the state of the church by nature, with a view of her helplessness and pollution—'and when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, live ;

yea, I said unto thee, live.' And see how the Lord covered the poor, naked, perishing creature, washing it with water, anointing it with the oil of His Spirit. He clothed it with fine linen, and robed it in every beauty of the Saviour's righteousness, putting a crown upon its head, and entering into a covenant with it—'and thou becamest mine, saith the Lord God;' 'and thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee.' In all this forcible picture of the natural state of every unrenewed man, there is no mention of any capability in the creature towards his own salvation; on the contrary, we are told in the 8th verse, that because it was 'the time of love,' the Lord had compassion and bid it live, as He says in Jeremiah xxxi. 3. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' Also when her renown went forth for her beauty, it was said that she was perfect through the Lord's comeliness which he had *put upon her*, and not for any intrinsic merit in herself. Throughout the whole of the chapter there is nothing like a supposed virtue in the creature, the very reverse is stated, for it is told us, that she trusted in her own beauty, and became vile through her spi-

ritual adultery, wandering farther and farther from her heavenly husband, and becoming ensnared by the idolatries of the world; nor does it appear that she was desirous of returning, till brought back by judgments, and made to remember her ways, and be ashamed. Still the gracious God tells her that He will yet remember his covenant, and cause her never more to open her mouth because of her shame, when He is pacified towards her. Here we see how the sinner is taken into God's service; and Henry, excuse me if I say, it is wholly contrary to the view you took yesterday of the subject; instead of man's having the ability to make the choice, and enter upon the duties, Scripture shows him lying helpless, polluted, and as it were dead; instead of his hesitating about refusing or accepting the offer, we find that it is said to him, 'live!' and life is given. The creature had no power, no will to ask, being spiritually dead; but it being 'the time of love,' or 'the accepted day,' he was quickened. Instead of his clothing himself with his own good deeds, his righteousness, his repentance, his prayers, we are told that the Lord clothed him, and made his beauty perfect through the comeliness which he put upon him. Look again at your remarks on his faithfulness in the service;

we see this creature clothed with beauty, and perfect in comeliness, left awhile 'to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Was there any fidelity found there? was there any principle of allegiance shown in his conduct? Again, instead of the believer being able to destroy himself utterly, and fall from his master's service into perdition, we read that the Lord remembered the covenant which He had made, restrained the wanderer, brought him back to Himself with shame and humility, caused a sense of his sins to confound him, and to shut the mouth of pride and boasting for ever, and then the Lord became pacified towards him. Your sermon was full of—ifs, here there are none. The sinner was chosen, his name written in the Lamb's book of life; his day arrived, and he was called by the Spirit, justified by the righteousness and blood of Christ, preserved by a covenant-keeping, unchanging God, raised up when fallen, restored to communion with his Lord, and kept unto the end."

"Mary," said her brother, who had patiently listened to all she had been saying, "I think your views have undergone a change since we last spoke on the subject, you have been among the *ultras*, I am sure; your doctrines are far too

high for me—where have you been to catch the infection ? ”

Mary replied, that she had been among no party, and could not catch any infection, as she had scarcely met with or spoken to any religious person. “ I do confess that my views are changed, and blessed be God for the increased manifestation which He has given me of Himself in His word. Ah ! Henry, be assured it is not mere change of opinion, not the adopting another set of doctrines, but a strong perception by faith of the clear and pure terms of the gospel. I might have been taught to receive the full truth, and my judgment might have acquiesced in its reasonableness, but to receive it into the heart by faith, to be led to acknowledge it by personal interest and experience of its blessedness, oh ! this is indeed the work of the Spirit alone.”

“ Well, but, Mary, we generally find means employed for the operation of changes of all kinds : tell me honestly, have you not met with some person who has instilled these ideas into your head.”

“ Before I answer you, Henry, let me repeat my assertion, that it is the heart and not the head only which has been acted upon. No, I give you my solemn assurance, that I have

met with no person or persons with whom I have discussed what you call high doctrines, nor, except the Scriptures, have I even opened a book which could tend to enlighten me. I have studied the Bible, and that alone. When I went abroad with my uncle, I felt very uneasy about the state of my soul. I saw that I was surrounded on all sides by every sort of ensnaring temptation. I knew that I had an enemy within, ready and willing to assist in betraying me into every evil. I felt that the excitement, the bewildering kind of hurry on the spirits, the novelty, the delusion, which attract the soberest mind from its sobriety, would shortly overcome my best-formed resolutions; with this conviction strongly impressed upon my mind, no doubt, by the great mercy of God, I determined to devote some hours in every day to my Bible, without any reference to human aid. I felt that I required ten-fold support, and ardently prayed as the 'new-born babe, to desire the sincere milk of the word.' I could fancy myself like nothing but the terrified infant in the old song, who, haunted by the fear of a frightful spirit, clings faster and closer to its parent's bosom,—

‘My Father, my Father, he’ll have me at last.’

The poor frightened child perishes before it

reaches its Father's home, but I had faith given me to cleave to him, and know that I was safe. I had no books on religion—I never heard a gospel sermon the nine months I was abroad; and, strange as it may seem, I never happened to meet with a human being who was interested in the subject. God, no doubt, intended to lead me away from all creature-help, that He might teach me that all sufficiency was from Him. I was taught to pray more urgently for the Spirit's influence on the scriptures, and led to go to them as my necessary food; the evil of my own heart was at the same time more peculiarly laid open to me. I had some very grievous temptations which broke in upon my happiness, and made me apprehensive of my interest in Christ; indeed so severe were the attacks at times, that I almost thought of giving all up: but this was my day of mercy, I was enabled to see the certainty of my calling and election; I could discover that the sinner was acquitted from all sin by the death of Christ, and daily washed from the pollution of it by His blood; I saw that all my attempts (I might almost say my struggles) to attain that internal holiness, which I fancied was required previous to my being justified from sin, were of no value as a condition of salvation; I saw that my righteous-

ness was already wrought out, if I was a believer, (and this I knew I was,) and that the ransom included all things, Jesus being 'made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;' I was led to see that I had been dishonouring my Saviour, by attempting to mix up my own merit with His glorious work; I had been vainly imagining in the pride and folly of human blindness, that I could, by great mortification, and repentance, and tears, and prayers, recommend myself to the favour of God; not considering that the thought carried dishonour to Him, who, in taking all our sins upon Himself, and dying to redeem His people, had wholly and fully completed the work, leaving us no pretence for mingling with His great and finished work, aught of our own adulterated achievements."

"Then, Mary, you seem to have come to this conclusion, that Christ having completely satisfied the divine justice, and fulfilled all the law, which his creatures had broken, we have nothing to do but to sit down contented and easy, assured that our salvation is secured, and that we shall never fall away from grace."

"Yes, Henry, that is in substance much what I believe, though not very correctly stated.. I am certain that Christ has, as you

say, completely satisfied the divine justice ; fulfilled the law which we had broken ; secured to believers eternal life, and assured them that ' no man shall pluck them out of his hand.' But we differ, I fear, in one essential point : you imagine that the reception of these doctrines leads to supineness and negligence in our spiritual walk. I am persuaded that from the moment they are received into the heart, the whole mind of man becomes *transformed*—religion is no longer the heavy oppressive duty, but the moving spring of life—the joy—the happiness—the comfort of being. I may be allowed to speak with confidence and boldness, for I have an experimental knowledge of what I affirm. I have tried each side, and, blessed be God, I can safely say there is not a shadow of comparison between the two ! You have only made trial of one way, therefore cannot claim the privilege of judging except by speculation, which, after all, is no proof. I give you a solemn fact, worth a hundred speculations, that the one is a depressing, melancholy state of bondage, in which the poor helpless slave, sometimes wishes and tries to be happy and look up, and thank his Master, but more frequently hangs his head under the burden of sin ; the consciousness of having forfeited his favour,

and the dread of approaching him. Intervals of hope and peace are given, for God will not utterly fail his own weak children, but the general tenor of the legal Christian's life is a toiling for the redemption *already* purchased for him, and a weeping for his want of success. I am sure any one who is possessed of discernment will allow that this is a most hopeless state to be in ; and although, Henry, you may not feel it to be so now, depend upon it, the time will come when you will find your spiritual strength unequal to your day ; trials and temptations are more or less distributed to all, and when they press upon the tried believer, and he feels that unbelief and infirmity are all that he can call intrinsically his own ; it is not a small measure of faith which will then support him. I pity the person who is capable of thinking that his salvation is in any degree contingent on himself ; what must his thoughts be when he is stripped of all his fancied worth, power, and ability to serve his Master, or even to seek him ?”

“ You do not suppose, my dear Mary, that God so entirely forsakes his people, that they are left to their own resources, without any help from him. I am persuaded that he never forsakes those who seek him in integrity, but

that the upright faithful servant has at all times the aid of God's Spirit."

"I do not know, Henry, how he could be upright and faithful, without that Spirit's influence. I am sure that you will find no man naturally faithful and upright. David was as fair a specimen of human virtue as any one, he was 'the man after God's own heart,' and yet see what became of his integrity and excellence, when temptation assailed him."

"Yes, Mary, because David was off his guard: he could not have been watching against evil and looking up to God for assistance, or he would not have fallen."

"Very true, he was left to himself awhile, that he might see what was in his heart, and I have no doubt the sight must have been a fearful one, when his eyes were enlightened to see the enormity of his guilt. And David does not appear to have shown any repentance till the prophet was sent to him, which has often struck me very forcibly. This seems to me, Henry, one of the strongest proofs of man's utter incapability of good; here was a man of acknowledged excellence, highly gifted in spiritual attainments, deeply experienced in the ways of religion, and raised to near communion with his Maker. No sooner was temptation suffered to exercise its

force, without a counteracting influence to destroy its action, than this very enlightened being fell into as gross sins as ever disgraced the irreligious or immoral. And such was its deadening power on the heart of the Psalmist, that he appeared for a long time sunk in spiritual death, without the wish or the ability to turn from his evil ways. Surely all must allow that if there were any actual worth in man, any ability to refuse the evil and choose the good, the 'man after God's own heart' would have been an evidence of the fact. But no ! David was left to himself, and he has shown us what strength is in man, and what power he naturally has to repent and forsake his evil ways. 'The Lord sent Nathan unto David,' it was upon receiving the word from the Lord, and not till then, that the transgressor acknowledged he had sinned against Him, and repented. And can any one, after this, imagine that he has any qualifications for becoming a faithful servant of his heavenly Master ? I think David's example a full proof that our strength is in God, and our sufficiency in him alone, and in no other. Henry, you will, I think, agree with me in this truth."

"Certainly I do, Mary, who would ever think of disputing it ; I know that we have not in ourselves any good nor any power to serve

God, but as it is imparted to us; but I think that God offers His spiritual help to all who are willing to accept of it, and if we fall, it is because we neglect to seek that assistance, not because it is not offered; hence David's awful fall."

"How do you interpret these passages?—
'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy,' 'therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth;' and 'He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.' 'No man can come unto Me except the Father draw him;' and 'man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven:' also our Lord's own ejaculation, 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast *hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' 'Even so,' must be our exclamation, for 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?'"

"These are mysterious points, which our

imperfect minds cannot fathom ; but, my dear Mary, our theological discussion is carrying us on beyond our time ; we can resume it at any other moment, although I think we differ less in substance than in expression."

"No, no! Henry, do not go away with this idea. I certainly do differ from you most materially, in substance, in doctrines; so do not fancy that the difference is trifling." Her brother smiled incredulously, and they returned to the house.

CHAPTER XV.

**'THE SIMPLE BELIEVETH EVERY WORD: BUT THE PRUDENT
MAN LOOKETH WELL TO HIS GOING.'**—Prov. xiv. 15.

In the course of that morning visitors were announced, and Mrs. Wilmot and her three daughters introduced themselves to Mary. The mother was a reputed 'serious character,' and the daughters supposed to follow in her steps; they were regular in their attendance at church on a Sunday, gave much assistance to the poor, were collectors for the Missionary and Bible Societies, treasurers and secretaries to the lying-in and Dorcas charities, superintendents of the national and Sunday schools, and promoters of fancy works for the different Bazaars.

"I hope you are come to stay some time with us," said Mrs. Wilmot, addressing Mary.

"Not very long, I fear, for we have to make other visits before the cold weather sets in."

"I am very sorry to hear that; my daughters were quite delighted to hear you were arrived—

your brother told us he expected you; they hoped to have shown you all the beauties of the neighbourhood, and to have interested you in our little societies; your brother's time is so taken up with his duties, that we thought he would hardly allow himself leisure to take you to see all the sights: you heard him preach yesterday, was it the first time of hearing him?"

Mary replied in the negative.

"He preaches delightfully, and his voice is so good, and his manner so quiet and gentlemanly, at the same time so persuasive and dignified, that he cannot fail to strike every one; he is a great favourite I assure you, Miss Conroy, with all here."

Mary smiled—"I don't know whether we should think that a favourable sign of his ministry, our Lord seemed to imply that the contrary would be the case, and the apostle met with very divided opinions."

"That's very true, but don't you think that the days of persecution are almost gone by; and is it not to be considered an advantage, when a preacher can, by his talents and persuasive manner, win souls to the gospel?"

Mary shook her head and smiled, but said no more; for she could not explain, as her brother was the subject under discussion.

“ Have you met with a work lately published on the subject of the various charities, and the ladies’ sales? I promised to lend it to your brother; I can leave it with you; my girls always have employment enough in preparing fancy things. Mr. Conroy laughs whenever he comes to our house, for the drawing-room tables are generally covered with their performances. I tell them sometimes I must send them to their own rooms, for I cannot lay my hand on a book or a sheet of paper for their piles of silk, straw, ribbon, pasteboard, bits of leather, cards, pincushions, needle books, &c. &c. I do think those Bazaars take up a great deal of time: what do you think, Miss Conroy? I dare say you are very clever at furnishing them with ornaments; do you spend much time upon them?”

“ Perhaps I ought to feel shame in saying that I am but a very unprofitable assistant; I have some few duties which engage me, and we are apt to fancy, if we do a little, that more is not required of us. I believe I might do much more if I could economise my hours: but when I have a book I am apt to forget how time goes.”

“ That’s just the way with Cora, we can get nothing out of her when she has a book in her hand. (Cora smiled) You read a great deal, I

dare say, Miss Conroy; your brother is a great reader,—may I ask what authors you have lately been perusing? I want some new books, and should be glad of your opinion.” Mary hesitated in her reply. “Oh, I only allude to serious works, we have a library which furnishes us with every other sort of reading, but I should like to make an addition to my own bookcase of religious authors.” Still Mary hesitated. “Perhaps, Miss Conroy, you will kindly make a memorandum of a few at your leisure, and we can see what we have, for our stock is pretty considerable already.

Mary at length replied, that her knowledge of divinity was really so limited, that she could not venture to mention any works. “I have lately found most benefit from studying the scriptures alone, searching them with the references, but I believe I must find more time for reading; for it seems so ignorant not to be able to give an opinion on different authors.”

“Oh, my dear Miss Conroy, I am quite sure you are right, and I only wish we all read our Bibles more, but I don’t know how it is, we seem to neglect them very much for other books:—and yet I think that we often receive great benefit from the experience and judgment of others.”

"I think," said Mary, "that we should receive more benefit, if we rested less on human authority."

"No doubt, you are quite right; leaning too much to the creature cannot be good for us. Mr. Conroy gave us an excellent sermon on this, two Sundays ago; you remember, Lucy, how struck we all were with his sentiments." Lucy said the sermon was a very fine one, she and Miss Hooper had been so pleased with it, that they had both taken notes of the whole, and finished it between them.—"I believe, mamma, the first one that Georgiana and I wrote was pretty correct, for I gave it to Mr. Conroy, and he said it was very accurate. Do you write short-hand, Miss Conroy?" She answered in the negative. "I think we have seen some sketches of your's, I hope you'll make a great many here, for the scenery is very pretty towards Belfont."

"I am sorry to say I don't draw at all, my brother sketches a little."

"Your brother draws beautifully! we got a sight of some of his books accidentally, but he will not show us any more, and he seems to have forsaken the pencil altogether."

At this instant he entered the room, and Mrs. Wilmot told him that they were just accusing

him of great idleness : " Georgiana tells Miss Conroy that you never draw now."

" My sister might have told Miss Georgiana that I never could draw at all. I merely took up a pencil to amuse myself a little, but nothing more. I am very fond of painting in all its branches, but I have no time now to pay any attention to it."

" I think I saw you taking a sketch of the Mill last Tuesday," said the elder Miss Wilmot.

" I believe I was making a slight outline of it."

" Mr. Conroy seems as if he thought it a crime to devote any time to the arts. I hope you won't encourage him, Miss Conroy, or we shall have all the pianos and portfolios in the parish closed."

" I am glad to hear that my brother has such influence, but I should be the last person to dissuade him from continuing any amusement which he finds agreeable or useful. Henry, you'll show me some of your sketches. I was hunting over the drawing room to-day, in hopes of discovering some."

Her brother assured her that he had not covered nine leaves of the book which she gave him. " I really have not time now; if any subject strikes me when I am out walking, and

I find a leisure half-hour to sketch, and think I am unobserved, I sometimes take out my book, but I dread the possibility of its being said, 'The parson finds time for making pictures, but we can hardly get him to pay us a visit when we want him.'"

"Oh! Mr. Conroy!" exclaimed the mother and daughters at once, "I'm sure no one would say that of you. Talking of pictures, have you ever seen Lord B——'s collection?" Mr. Conroy said he had not. "Could we not make a party and drive over there some day while Miss Conroy is with us."

"That would be delightful," said the two elder daughters, "and the Miss Hoopers were wishing to go; we can make up a charming party: there are five of them, with their brother Captain Hooper. We must ask Mrs. Farren and her daughter, you know, Lucy, they are very serious people. Dear me, what shall we do about the Watsons! they would be quite affronted to be passed over, and yet they are not what we call of our party, they are very worthy people, but quite worldly. What shall we do Mr. Conroy, do pray give us your opinion."

"By all means ask them, if you think it right, I can have no objection."

The youngest Miss Wilmot who had not

opened her lips during the visit, turned her eyes upon Mary, as if expecting some observation,—“Cora,” said her mamma, “what is it? you seem to dislike the Watsons going with us.” Cora coloured, and replied that she was not thinking of herself at that moment. “I thought perhaps Miss Conroy might think the party rather a large one for enjoyment.”

“Oh not at all, I assure you,” said Mary, “if we are all friends in one common interest, I could not think the number an objection.”

“You know, Cora, that they are all religious people, except the Watsons; and their nephew, the vicar of St. Mary’s, we must ask him, or they would hardly forgive us, and he is so good-natured, that one cannot dislike him, although we cannot but grieve over his blindness to spiritual religion.”

“He plays very finely on the flute; are you fond of music?” “Very fond of music,” Mary replied.

“I dare say you are a great musician,” said Mrs. Wilmot, “Oh my daughters will find you a delightful acquisition to our society! we are obliged to ask young Mr. Watson sometimes, and he accompanies so well on the flute that it makes him a desirable person wherever there are musical young ladies. He has been of great

use to Lucy and Georgiana, they were so foolishly shy of playing before strangers, that I did not know what to do with them ; but Mr. Watson has helped them amazingly ; he is very good humoured, is he not Mr. Conroy ? What a pity it is that he is so dark on religious subjects ! We got a subscription from him for the new school-house, and my daughters have half teased him into putting his name down for the Bible Society, but he won't hear any thing of the missionary cause. It is a sad thing to find people so opposed to what is right ! Now, there's even Mr. Forbes, who is said to be an evangelical preacher, we were a long time before we could get him to join us ; and he is not very cordial after all. We must introduce Miss Conroy to him, perhaps she may be able to make something more of him, for we have all done our best. How do you and he get on Mr. Conroy ? I should fear he is hardly spiritual enough for you ! ”

No reply was made to this inquiry, and Mrs. Wilmot repeated her question in a new form, “ I believe Mr. Forbes to be a most excellent man, but from what I have heard and seen of him, I am sure that his views are not much enlightened. I understand he visits indiscriminately, and indeed I heard last week

that he was at the concert. Now you know, Mr. Conroy, that all this is contrary to the spirit of the gospel, and one cannot help grieving that any professor of religion, especially a minister, should give occasion to the world to talk." These remarks were addressed to the young rector, the elder Mr. Conroy, his uncle, being seated in a retired part of the room. "Perhaps you don't like giving your opinion," said the persevering Mrs. Wilmot.

"Indeed, I scarcely know how I am to reply, I have so little acquaintance with Mr. Forbes, that it would be wrong in me to offer an opinion; besides I am inclined to think that it is hardly charitable to condemn any one, unless, by so doing, we hope to benefit him or those to whom our remarks are addressed."

Mrs. Wilmot reddened—"I did not mean to condemn Mr. Forbes, perhaps I ought to have kept my opinion to myself, but I am apt to speak my mind when I feel among friends. I believe, however, it is best to be cautious." Mr. Conroy made no reply, and one of the daughters remarked, that Mr. Forbes was a very clever agreeable man, and fond of society, and a great lover of music, which might be a reason why he was induced to attend the concerts. "Ah! there's my charitable Lucy always finding an

excuse for other people. Lucy, my dear, have you finished the sketch of the church which Mr. Conroy wished to have?" The daughter answered, that it was finished all but the mounting and bordering; she would send it home the next day. "Georgiana has copied out those verses you wanted, Mr. Conroy, they shall be sent with the drawing, and also the prospectus of our school."

He inquired of the ladies how the Sunday school flourished, and thanked the daughters for their constant attendance.

"Oh, my dear Sir, don't think of thanking my daughters for that, it is a task they delight in; besides, it would be a hard case indeed if we were to have all the benefit of your good preaching, and bring forth no fruits, you surely deserve every attention to your school from us—my daughters have attended regularly since you first mentioned it." The elder Mr. Conroy coughed aloud, a means he usually employed of making his niece sensible that something amused him. Mrs. Wilmot did not observe it, and proceeded, "I don't think Lucy or Georgiana have missed once; Cora fancies she is not wanted, but the other two, I think, have assisted very much, with the help of the Miss Hoopers: it is a delightful thing to watch the progress of

religion in the young mind, and to see how extensive the spread of it is becoming in these days among all classes ; there never was a time like this for attention to the wants of the poor, for societies of every kind, even in this neighbourhood see what advantages we possess. Here are schools, and Bible, and Missionary, and Tract Societies, with every sort of charity for the temporal wants of the poor, and with all this the Gospel preached so ably in two churches ! ”

“ I wish,” said Mary’s brother, “ that we could add to these many blessings, the assurance that, with the outward means, there followed a great increase of vital piety in our hearts. I am afraid that we are apt to be satisfied with the spread of knowledge, without desiring to attain that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord ! ”

Mrs. Wilmot sighed, and wished it was more the case ; the wish came from her heart, for though an inconsistent and often a wrong judging woman, and one who was perpetually engrossed by her anxieties about her daughters’ success in life ; she was nevertheless a well-meaning person, and at heart solicitous about the cause of religion, and anxious to promote

it, both in her own soul and in the souls of others. It may be supposed that she scarcely attained her end, for, although extremely useful as a promoter of all religious institutions, her mind was too little interested in the personal reign of Christ in her own heart, to secure her advance in grace, or to enable her to assist others.

"There are the Watsons, I do think," said Mrs. Wilmot, rousing from a reverie into which she had fallen. The Watson party it certainly was, with the Vicar of St. Mary's. After a little general conversation, Mrs. Wilmot alluded to the pictures at Lord B——'s, and none of the company having seen them, it was agreed that some fine morning they should all set forth on a pic-nic and picturesque expedition.

"We have made a terribly long morning visit, and intruded upon your time sadly," said Mrs. Wilmot, addressing Mary, and taking her aside to fix a day for dining with them, as her time would be limited, and they wished to see as much of her as possible. Mary in vain attempted to excuse herself; if she disliked dining out, she positively must spend an evening soon, and Miss Wilmot suggested that the Hoopers, and a few other friends were coming

on Wednesday ; that day therefore was agreed on, when Mary was to engage her uncle and brother to accompany her.

No sooner had the whole group departed, than Mr. Conroy placed himself opposite his niece, and resuming his peculiar cough, said, "that's one of your serious people, as you call them, isn't she, Mary? aha! a very excellent woman, no doubt, and a most admirable auxiliary to her own daughters, as well as to the numerous societies she patronises. Henry, the girls are not ill-looking! what's the reason though that Miss Cora keeps herself so in the shade? I did not hear her open her lips; however, the other two made up for her deficiency."

"Ah, uncle, I see you are quite as fond of a little satire as you used to be."

"Satire, boy! do you call that satire? what is the harm of young ladies liking to talk? but you are right to take the woman's side."

The nephew laughed, and Mary delivered Mrs. Wilmot's message, and it was agreed that they should accept the invitation.

CHAPTER XVI.

‘ LORD, WHO SHALL DWELL IN THY HOLY HILL?—HE
THAT SPEAKETH THE TRUTH IN HIS HEART.’—Ps. xv. 1, 2.

WEDNESDAY arrived, and they reached Mrs. Wilmot's early in the evening, as was stipulated. The mother and daughters welcomed them with much cordiality, the uncle was begged to place himself in an arm chair beside Mrs. Wilmot, and quite out of reach of draught : there were two or three persons residing in the neighbourhood, who were introduced to Mary. Shortly after, the door opened, and the five Miss Hoopers and their papa and brother were announced. They looked rather shy and awkward, but after they had fairly got seated in various parts of the room, their embarrassment seemed to wear off.

Mr. Forbes was next ushered in, a middle-aged gentlemanly-looking man, who took his station beside the youngest Miss Wilmot. Then

came the Watsons and the Rev. Mr. Charles Watson, Vicar of St. Mary's; he made his bow to Mrs. Wilmot, and placed himself amidst the group at the upper end, consisting of the two elder Miss Wilmots, and the five Miss Hoopers. Sir George and Lady Hare, with an elderly clergyman, completed the party.

After tea, Mrs. Wilmot inquired if Mr. Watson had brought his flute, and he answering in the affirmative, she requested one of the Miss Hoopers to oblige the company with some music. Sir George Hare, and Mr. Henry Conroy were talking together without regarding the musicians, and they continued in conversation till the performance ceased. Mary was then asked to play, but she begged to decline, as there were so many ladies who would take her place; Georgiana and Lucy Wilmot then played and sung an Italian air, accompanied by Mr. Watson, who had a full deep voice. Mrs. Wilmot seeing Mr. Henry Conroy still in conversation with Sir George Hare, and not attending to her daughters, but both, as is usually the case, raising their voices when the tones became louder, ventured to remind them by a gentle whisper, that they were losing a very beautiful glee. Her hint had the desired effect: the gentlemen moved towards the piano, and the

singing continued for upwards of an hour and a half.

Meantime Mary had taken the chair beside Cora Wilmot, which had been vacated by Mr. Forbes when the piano was opened, and finding her very willing to enter into conversation, they talked together in an under-tone till the singing ceased, and Mrs. Wilmot again urged Mary to play. She pleaded want of practice, and begged to be excused, but finding her apologies would not be accepted, she sat down and played some of Handel's finest music. Mr. Forbes looked much delighted, and Mr. Watson took his flute and accompanied her with considerable skill. Mrs. Wilmot was loud in her praises, and thought nothing so fine as sacred music; "there is my daughter Cora, she never will play any thing else; Cora," said the fond mother, "come here, my dear, perhaps Miss Conroy will kindly accompany you, if you sing, 'Angels ever bright and fair.'" The daughter seemed very unwilling to comply, but the mother urged that it would be quite on her conscience if she let the evening pass away without some sacred singing, and turning to Mr. Henry Conroy who stood beside her, "Now would it not be quite wrong to close the piano without something like a hymn; do, my dear sir, use your influence

with Cora and your sister." "Better make use of mine," said Mary's uncle, stepping forward, "an old man has sometimes as much influence as a young one with some persons;" and approaching the youngest Miss Wilmot to lead her to the piano, "I think by your countenance, you will not object to gratify an old man with a song." "Oh! a hymn, my dear Sir," said the mother interrupting him.—"Oh! a hymn, it is all one! we have had songs, and it is to be a hymn now." Cora coloured deeply, and looked at Mary, who immediately began the accompaniment. Cora's voice was very sweet in its tones, but too weak for the music which was chosen. Mary assisted her, and the gentlemen joined. The company were all so pleased that they unanimously encored it.

"Now," said Mr. Watson, "as we are all in such good tune, let us have the old national air, 'God save the king,' there is nothing better!"

"Oh, shocking! Mr. Watson;" exclaimed Mrs. Wilmot; "what—after a hymn?"

"I don't see, Ma'am, why we should not; there is very little less address to the Deity in the one than in the other; I don't suppose any of us fancy ourselves psalm-singers just now, because we happen to select one of Handel's invocations

of the angels," and the Vicar of St. Mary's laughed.

"Fie! fie! Mr. Watson," said Mrs. Wilmot, looking very grave.

The Miss Hoopers and her daughters joined her in upbraiding him for his levity; but they seemed so inclined to laugh at his ludicrous manner of treating their remonstrances, that he only became worse.

Mary and Cora returned to their chairs and their conversation; Mrs. Wilmot engaged Mr. Henry Conroy in looking over a few pencil drawings which her daughters had been doing from some prints; she brought the originals, and asked him if it was not almost difficult to distinguish between the two. He seemed at a loss for an answer. The prints were bad ones, and faithfully copied, failures and all; the copies were done on fine Bristol boards, with Brookman's hardest lead; nothing could be more miserable than the performances; and Mr. Henry Conroy, drawing himself, and being a good judge of the art, was extremely perplexed when these specimens of the young ladies' skill and industry were placed before him; but he was still more embarrassed when the already-mentioned sketch of his own church

was brought for his admiration and acceptance. The paper was beautiful, the border richly embossed ; the lines were certainly upright, but sketched in as if by a steel pen, and by way of throwing in some effect, it was shaded and reshaded in a most laborious manner, without any knowledge or attention to light and shade.

"Now is not that pretty?" said the admiring mother; "I think the church looks so well, half concealed by those trees. Lucy took immense pains with them; see what a quantity of work is in them; trees, you know, require so much shading to produce any effect."

"It is certainly very like," said the young Rector, examining the church more nearly, and wishing to say something civil in return for the pains the young lady had taken with his drawing.

"You like it then," said Miss Lucy, smiling very agreeably.

"It is very like," repeated the embarrassed man, resolved not to gratify the lady at the sacrifice of conscience.

"I don't think Mr. Conroy does like it," said the mother, looking stedfastly at him, "Lucy shall make you another."

"By no means, Mrs. Wilmot, she could not possible make any thing more like the original."

"I am sorry I have failed; I thought you would have been pleased with my sketch—I took all possible pains with it."

"Indeed, Miss Wilmot, I am exceedingly obliged to you; I am certain you have bestowed much more labour on it than I should have thought of asking; I must assure you that I think it very like, and again thank you for your attention."

"Miss Lucy looked disappointed at the bad success of her drawing, and insisted on making another, if he would only point out what he objected to. More annoyed than before, he repeated his assurances that he by no means wished any alterations to be made. Mr. Watson now came forward, and took up the drawing—"What is all this discussion about, Miss Lucy? are you offering, and the gentleman refusing so beautiful a picture, in such energetic terms."

"Oh! dear no," said the young lady in rather a piqued tone, "I thought Mr. Conroy wanted a sketch of his church, and mamma insisted on my making one for him; but I fear my attempt has not been successful."

"Not successful!" said the Vicar, "why what would any one have! this is a beautiful drawing! nothing could be better finished; look at those highly-shaded trees, and the

exquisitely delicate work on the tower; why, Conroy, I should be delighted to have such a specimen of a lady's talent and partiality for me—no one offers to make me a sketch of St. Mary's; I think, as you don't seem to know the value of a young lady's performances, I will even carry this off to ornament my study."

"So you shall, Mr. Watson, if you wish for it, and Lucy shall set about another for Mr. Conroy to-morrow."

"I must claim the original as done for me," said the latter gentleman, laying his hand on the drawing, and speaking in a firm tone, although his look was slightly agitated, "or I must altogether decline giving any further trouble." Thus ended the difficulty. "The Hares are always early people," said Mrs. Wilmot, "don't think of rising, Miss Conroy; we have to arrange our pic-nic party before you go. By the bye, I ought to call on the Blissets, Lady Blisset will think it so strange; they have been back this three days."

"Oh! mamma," said the eldest daughter, "how can they think it strange, they are only just come."

"Yes, my dear, but you know it looks so uncivil."

"I am sure, mamma, if I were you I should

not call so soon, you know they never think of returning your visit for months after you call."

Mrs. Wilmot coloured, and said Lady Blisset was to be excused, her health was always so delicate.

"But you know, mamma, that she can call on the Hares and other people when she likes."

Mrs. Wilmot dropped the subject, and resumed the question of the party. A day was at length fixed, and the company separated.

"'Pon my word, Henry," said the uncle, "that was an awkward scrape you got into about the drawing; the mother and daughter looked foolish enough."

"I am afraid they thought me excessively rude and thankless, but I have made a resolution never to gratify my own feelings, or those of others, at the expense of my conscience, if I can possibly help it; naturally, I should like to say the civil thing, and keep all around me in good humour; but I have learnt that this is a very dangerous propensity, and leads one into a number of little difficulties, as well as direct falsehoods. I might have praised the drawing, but I should have lied against my own judgment; it was a bad performance, yet being done in a good-natured way to please

me, I should have liked, had it been possible, to have appeared gratified by the gift: as it is, I fear I have incurred the displeasure of the young lady; but it must be so, one cannot take the straight path always without meeting with some obstacles."

"Well! my boy, you have done as much as any philosopher could have done in a similar trial; and as the young ladies seem very good-natured and friendly in their feelings towards you, I have no doubt that you will soon be in favour again. And now, my dear Mary, tell me how you liked your evening, and what engaged you and Miss Cora Wilmot in such earnest conversation; by the bye, how came she by such a name?"

"I have heard her mother say, that before the birth of her third daughter, she had been reading Sheridan's play of Pizarro, and was so delighted with the character of Cora, that she determined on naming her infant, should it be a daughter, after that heroine."

"Poh!" said the uncle, "Henry, the women are fools! Cora Wilmot however seems a very amiable, gentle, and unpretending creature; but come, Mary, answer my questions about your evening."

"On the whole, I enjoyed it very much."

"You did ! why what would Mrs. Harding, and Mrs. Mires, and all that set, say to your enjoying an evening among a party of non-conformists, as I should call these in reference to the others. Is this what you term a religious party, Henry, in your neighbourhood ? "

"I hardly know how to answer the question : the company whom we met to-night were chiefly composed of persons ranking themselves under this head ; but two or three make no pretensions, and I fear show little interest, the others are supposed to be religious characters."

"*Soi disants*, I should imagine, Henry, by your manner of describing them."

The nephew said he did not mean to give that impression, and the uncle replied, that he, for his part, had no fault to find ; he should not imagine them very orthodox in their principles, but he must say that he found himself much more at home and comfortable amidst these than with the rigid devotees of Ashton. "Here was kindness, hospitality, and friendly feeling. I could appreciate this, and would make no objection to their religious discussions, provided they did not expect me to join ; but I was quite out of my place among the long faces and cold manners of the others." Henry smiled, and the carriage stopping, the conversation

ceased till after prayers, when Henry followed his sister to her room, and asked her how she liked his acquaintance, and what she thought of the neighbourhood. Mary said, that she thought them all very good-natured and friendly. "But," added her brother, finishing the sentence for her, "not serious enough to suit you: I am sure, Mary, you felt uncomfortable in passing the evening in so unprofitable a manner." "No, Henry, I can't say that I did, for it happened that I enjoyed it very much. I got beside the youngest Miss Wilmot, whom I found a most interesting companion. She and I talked together almost the whole time, and I trust with mutual benefit. She appears a sweet unaffected girl, and very desirous of religious improvement. I must confess, that had I not found some one with whom to converse on these subjects, I should have returned uncomfortable and pained in conscience. I don't think it at all right that persons, interested in one great cause, and subjects of one glorious kingdom, should meet together without any allusion to their high calling. I know that we cannot at all times feel alive and equally interested; but I think that the Lord's own people, children adopted into His house, and selected out of a multitude, should endeavour by mutual

encouragement, to awaken in each other's bosom a solicitude for their souls' advance in spiritual knowledge. I think that we should make a point of conversing more on subjects connected with our common interest." Her brother fully agreed in opinion, but thought there might be times when it would not be possible to introduce such topics. "In a mixed society," he added, "composed of some persons understanding these things, and of others indifferent to them."

"My rule, I think, shall be, Henry, when I have a house, to invite only such persons as will attend to conversations on serious subjects. I shall not require all to take a part; but should I lose an opportunity of strengthening my own faith, by banishing those subjects which interest, or ought to interest, the better part of my guests, because a few were indifferent? No! no! let them come and join us if they will, but it should be on this footing: and I would try to have knowledge imparted in a useful manner; I would wish to receive information myself, and that all besides should be equally benefited. I am sure there are a hundred ways in which the scriptures might be made interesting, even to persons unawakened to their importance: I do not mean to say that I think exhortations, precepts, or addresses to

the feelings would advance the object much, in the way of information ; but the understanding might be cultivated, the judgment enlightened, the reasoning faculties brought into action with great advantage ; one half of the preachers of the gospel whom I have heard neglect this ; or if they undertake it, you must, Henry, allow me to say, I think they very rarely succeed in making their hearers understand the clear and simple doctrines of the gospel."

"But who, Mary, are to be the persons to bring forward and carry on the conversations at these parties of yours ?"

Mary laughed, and said, not herself, but it would be easy to select two or three well-informed clergymen or other qualified persons, who might introduce and support a conversation in an agreeable and improving manner. "I do not mean a cold dry speculative discussion, but a social friendly communication of opinions, such as would be listened to with attention, and might be interrupted by questions arising out of the subject, without fear of censure."

Her brother agreed that such a plan might be adopted with benefit, and he sighed as he acknowledged how many an evening was suffered to pass without any improvement, and with no advantage.

"Well, Henry, let us have a party at your house while I am here, and let us see if we cannot try and have it arranged upon this plan."

"Provided I am not to be the chief actor in the scene."

"Oh, Henry, this will not do, you must not be the first to draw back."

"Will you and Cora Wilmot second me?"

"I do not know if she will ; but I will bring forward some points on which I have found difficulties, if you will undertake to throw light upon them."

"How can you ask this of me, Mary, when you know you think my opinions erroneous on some heads?"

"True, Henry, but you may study them attentively, and see what that will do ; and we can get the Rector of Drayford to join us : you said you would drive me there to-morrow."

"His health is declining, and he seldom goes out, but you may try to prevail on him ; he is a most delightful old man, but considered here rather high in his doctrines : however that will be no fault with you : and I have so great a respect for his character and principles, that it would be impossible for me to find any objection to him."

When Mary's brother had wished her good

night, and closed the door, she began to recal the events of the day. She felt that several persons had met together that evening, all in some measure professing to be the disciples of Christ. Yet how was it that they neglected to make mention of His name? and how was it that no allusion was made to the only subject which in point of fact was worth an immortal being's attention, and which should especially be considered the first and only important concern with a Christian, renewed by the Spirit of God:—"Were we all new creatures, a chosen people, an holy nation, a royal priesthood;—if so, which of us evinced his high calling? Not I,—I am very sure! how full was my mind of vanity, levity, and folly—how ready to attend to any trifling remarks—how easily induced to join in unmeaning conversation;—when I was amidst several of the Lord's own enlightened people, from whom I might, had I been willing, have derived some benefit. Had it not been for Cora Wilmot's desire to introduce serious subjects, I probably should have passed a whole evening amidst brothers and sisters in the faith, without once remembering my Lord."

Mary's reflections were not comforting ones. She felt and mourned the evil of a treacherous,

wandering heart. She knew that saving grace and 'marvellous light' had been communicated to her soul—that living faith had been imparted, whereby she could claim an interest in the blood of atonement—that a spirit of adoption had been graciously vouchsafed, enabling her to cry, 'Abba! Father,' and that a sense of remission of sins had been granted, through which the terrors of the law had been overcome. And yet with all these proofs of Divine favour, so unmerited and so unworthily received, she felt she had thought little of the gracious Giver of all good, and had failed to speak the praises of that blessed Saviour who had manifested Himself in such mercy to her soul. Crushed and humbled under a sense of utter worthlessness, Mary cast herself before the throne of grace, "taking with her words and turning to the Lord," pleading the all-prevailing intercession and blood of Christ, and imploring pardon for the past, and strength for the future, to enable her, at all times and under all circumstances, to 'seek first the kingdom of heaven.' She knew that, had she been successful in training her mind to perform the good in which she had failed, she never would have rendered herself more deserving of redemption, or in any degree have secured to herself a stronger hope of eter-

nal life; she felt conscious of powerlessness in her best efforts, and knew that an unprofitable servant she must still remain, even had she performed the duty in which she had failed. But it would have been a pleasure to her to have felt that, unprofitable as she would ever be, while continuing in the service of her Master on earth, she had endeavoured to be telling of His salvation, and leading others to join her in raising a song of gratitude for the discovery of the 'unsearchable riches of Christ.' Mary remembered with thankfulness that her Master had given her one opportunity of speaking of Him; and she prayed that Cora Wilmot might, with herself, be led nearer and nearer to their Lord, that they might be raised above self, and live by faith on the fulness of Christ. She closed her prayer, as was her custom, when not quite cast down and dispirited by unbelief and sin, with fervent and reiterated praise. She praised the Triune God for electing love, for knowledge of salvation, for the remission of sins, for justifying righteousness, for the spirit of adoption, for assurance of persevering grace, for the hope of glory. Thoughts like these gave life and breath to her prayer: it was the voice of a child overcome by a sense of a parent's unmerited and abounding love; its tones might

occasionally become sad and low, through the burden of sin and infirmity, but they were not the moanings and anxious fears of a slave approaching his Master, conscious of many failures, and fearful of his anger. Mary rose strengthened, refreshed in soul, and comforted, her sole hope and rest was in Christ; the more she saw of self, the less was she induced to look there for help. She felt his atoning blood efficacious indeed. 'Mighty to save : '—she repeated the words again and again. 'Mighty to save !' in truth, or how had I ever dared to hope that I should reach heaven ! Daily, hourly, I am seeking to destroy myself, to renounce His allegiance, and to serve His enemies. Yet He never forsakes me—never fails to help me—and will never let me perish, nor suffer any one to pluck me out of his hand. Blessed assurance ! may it animate me to press on—to live more in heaven—to glorify Him more—to urge others to seek Him with me. A vile, worthless, wandering sinner, raised to share His glory ! Oh, may this blessed joyful conviction ever excite me to increased diligence, that I may 'run and not be weary, and walk and not faint !'

CHAPTER XVII.

‘ TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.’

Phil. i. 21.

ON the following day, as they drove towards the house of the old Rector whom Mary had requested to see, they passed the church-yard, and the first object that caught their attention was the old man himself, standing beside the grave of one of his parishioners, and committing his earthly remains to their kindred dust. On perceiving him, Henry pulled up the horse, and awaited the conclusion of the solemn ceremony.

As soon as the church service was ended, and the book closed, the Rector addressed the silent and sorrowing mourners:—" You are assembled here," he said, " on this solemn occasion, to commit to its last home all that now remains on earth of our respected and much-loved friend John Evans. I need not remind such as are here present, and knew the man whose body lies slumbering beneath, that the

death of a righteous man is matter for joy rather than for sorrow. The sigh will rise in the bosom, and the tear fill the eye, as human nature feels the pang of separation; but the heart of the believer will still rejoice: he looks from the mortal tenement, to the immortal spirit of the justified and glorified saint: he looks with the eye of faith, and sees the poor, tried, and tempted sinner safe at his journey's end—safe in his Father's house—safe in the purchased inheritance! No more trials for him,—no more anxieties,—no more sighs for freedom from sin,—no more anxious longings for a further display of his Saviour's power and glory:—all is over! He is at home, and in his Father's house! Angels rejoice over him, and glorified saints, in possession of their portion, greet him with songs of triumph;—while his gracious Master bids him welcome, 'Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'—His bliss is secure from eternity to eternity: worlds may be swept away, and multitudes 'who would not have God to reign over them,' may for ever be removed from the presence of the Lord: time itself will be no more, but the believer in Jesus sits on his right hand;—enjoys the full glory of his Master's kingdom;—lives in the blessed possession of His

heavenly favour, and worships and adores Him with unceasing and unmingled joy and triumph ! My beloved friends, is there not cause enough here for our hearts to rise in gratitude ? Is there not ground for rejoicing ? Might we not almost raise our voices in a song of praise ? Let us retire to our homes, and bless the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, that he has taken our beloved brother to himself. Let us seek diligently to redeem the time, to press forward on the heavenly road, ever ' looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.' We shall make no advances unless we look to him : every thing in self, is sinful, and stamped with infirmity. Look to Him, he is ' the author.' He it is who begins the work in us, giving us desires after him. He strengthens, upholds, guides, preserves us. He is ' the finisher,' carrying us on to the end, never leaving us, never forsaking us, till the work is finished in glory. Do not trust to yourselves, think as meanly of yourselves as the spirit now in safety was ever known to think of himself ; exalt the Saviour as he did ; go to him in all your sorrows, he can pity ; go to him in all your temptations and difficulties, he will carry you through : he has promised to do it. Trust him fully,—trust him at all times ; and in patient hope

and joyful anticipation await the summons which shall shortly be sent forth to call us home. Bless the Lord : bless him especially for all those who depart in his faith and fear ; theirs is a glorious exchange."

The Rector's voice ceased, and the mourners slowly and silently withdrew. When Mary's brother advanced, and introduced his sister, he held out his hand with an expression of much kindness, trusting, as he said, that he met a sister in the faith, and one with whom he might hope to pass an endless eternity. "I have," he continued, "just committed to the narrow house, the earthly remains of an aged and faithful servant of the Lord ; a man whose character and conduct was an honour to his station, and one whose acquaintance it was my delight and happiness to cultivate. Many an hour have I passed with him in delightful conversation ; many a time, when my mind has been depressed by the cares and anxieties attendant on my profession, has the cheering influence of that departed man's simple, holy faith, brightened my cloudy views, and raised and animated my spirit. I am not, my dear friends, one of those idolaters who are given to exalt human creatures on pedestals, and bend the head in token of admiration and

honour. I know too well what is in them to fall into this error : I am aware ‘ that the heart of man answereth to man,’ but I cannot withhold my tribute of love and esteem for a being, from whom, under divine influence, I have frequently derived benefit and consolation ; but while doing this I would by no means be supposed to magnify any thing short of the Saviour. I remember to have heard a very excellent young man in the church relate the first useful lesson he received on this subject. He told me that during the time he was at college, and while his mind was deeply impressed with the blessedness of being wholly devoted to his Master, he was one day walking with an experienced friend through the streets of Cambridge : A gentleman past by them : my young friend looked after him, and turning to his companion, exclaimed ‘ Ah, there goes a faithful servant of God, that is a man I should like to resemble—a holy, devoted, self-denying pattern of all that is best in a Christian.’ His companion abruptly interrupted him.—‘ That man, Sir, is a very great sinner !’ My friend at once understood and felt the strength of the observation ; and he has, I believe, since that moment known how to set a just value on human attainment. We must all sooner or later learn

to separate between the creature's natural capability, and the transforming power. We may, and ought to admire the beautiful and wondrous works of God, and where shall we find them shining so conspicuously as in the renewed nature of man; what is so lovely as the constraining grace which softens down the asperities of the natural heart, and warms and excites it to all the generous and kindly feelings. But while we love and admire what is so excellent, we must remember with our friend, that every man is a 'very great sinner,' and liable to fall into the foulest sins, except he be sustained and preserved by the almighty power of God. We love every believer with an especial love, because he is a child of the same ransomed family, and a member of the same glorious body: we love with a still stronger affection those who appear by their walk and conversation to be living in intimate communion with the Father of mercies: we love them for the lustre they seem to derive from their high privileges; we honour them as ambassadors bearing important intelligence from another kingdom; we delight in them, in other words, because the Saviour has stamped his image on their hearts. It is in fact, Christ in them which excites our wonder and admiration; we lose sight of the creature

in adoring the Creator ; and gratitude to him for transforming grace, imparted to ourselves and others, kindles in our bosoms the deepest sense of thankfulness, and awakens that constraining affection which causes us to love each other 'with a pure heart fervently.' My dear Miss Conroy," continued the old man, addressing Mary, " this is a spirit we should all desire to cultivate. I doubt not that your brother inculcates the same doctrine, but I am an older man, and from my years, privileged to say any thing, and I would urge upon you to bear it much in mind : a spirit of kindness, affection, and charity, is of great value in society, and commends itself to every one ; it is a lovely evidence of that blessed faith which is the gift of God. St. Paul knew so well the excellence of it, that in summing up the three abiding principles, he adds, ' but the greatest of these is charity.' Faith is the immediate gift of God ; a principle which the nature of man is utterly incapable of attaining. Charity is a virtue imperfectly possessed, or rather imitated, by the merely moral man, but it can never be rendered pure without the agency of the Spirit, acting by faith ; it appears to me to be that affectionate, and kind, and tender habit of feeling which springs from a heart

overflowing with its own happiness; with a deep sense of obligation. It is the fulfilling of the law to our fellow men. Through faith is the knowledge of the remission of sins (the most joyful knowledge that guilty man ever receives). By faith we know that our souls shall be kept in safety, and that we shall never be cast off; and are not these assurances, these blessed communications, manifested to us by faith, enough to touch every harmonious chord in the heart of man? Must not the very nature of them tend to nourish all the best, and happiest, and purest sympathies? We love the Lord because 'he first loved us.' We love each other because 'the love of Christ constrains us.' We cannot help it, we are so happy, so blessed, so surrounded on all sides by promises of mercy, that the heart seeks objects on which to pour its grateful feelings. The stronger the faith, and the nearer we are drawn to our gracious Master, the purer and deeper is our love to man. 'Peter,' said our Lord, 'lovest thou me?'—'Feed my sheep.' It was no difficult task for the disciple who loved his Lord indeed, to 'deal his bread to the hungry.' Faith is truly a gracious gift—a godlike boon to man; and charity the equally gracious manifestation of it to those around us. Cultivate it, my dear

young lady, with all solicitude, it will bring glory to your heavenly Father, and peace to your own bosom."

Mary was much pleased with the simplicity and kindness of the old Rector's manner; still more so with the nature of his conversation. His appearance was equally striking:—he was tall, very upright for a man advanced in life, and of a very courteous and gentle manner; his hair was almost white, and his countenance placid, with an occasional shade of melancholy; but his temper was cheerful and lively, and might at times almost be termed gay. The outline of his face was very fine, the features regular and good. Mary thought she had never seen a more striking or interesting character, and she felt half inclined to envy the people who could constantly hear such a minister.

Among other topics introduced, and while he was inquiring with much interest of her brother about his parish, they spoke of popularity in preaching, a subject on which the latter was desirous of obtaining his opinion. The old gentleman smiled—"I am aware," he added, "that on first entering the ministry, and indeed frequently long after, popularity seems to us, though a dangerous attainment, yet, in many respects a very desirable advantage. We think

that while we are enabled to attract and attach, we possess increased means of usefulness; and we hope that by rendering our preaching as agreeable as we can, consistently with our sense of faithfulness, many will attend us who otherwise would not hear the gospel in any form whatever. This reasoning sounds very plausible, and being enforced by nature and strengthened by the voice of the multitude, easily inclines us to its side. But allowing to popularity every claim, and certainly it has many, it nevertheless is a dangerous foe to the deceitful heart of man, and is too commonly an evidence that all cannot be right in the doctrines of that preacher who attracts and retains a large and admiring congregation, composed of persons of various opinions, and of very dissimilar views. We cannot, surely, be so misled as to imagine that the truth, the pure and unalloyed Scripture truth, will ever be received by the unrenewed heart without opposition; we know that the natural mind is enmity against God, and we are repeatedly warned by our Saviour to expect this principle to manifest itself. It has been said of late, that the days of persecution and opposition to the gospel have gone by. The days of violent and open persecution are indeed past,

but the spirit of the world 'which lieth in wickedness' is as clearly displayed in these times as when our Lord forewarned his disciples of its inevitable manifestation. I am as fully persuaded of this inimical feeling as of my own existence, but the reason why we see so little of it exhibited is, that too many have fallen into the error of preaching a smooth unoffensive gospel. I would not pass a severe censure on any man; but I cannot help remarking, that there appears a great departure from the simplicity of the faith. I would hope some err from ignorance, and some are deceived by a treacherous heart, (which leads us all, more or less, to self-gratification,) and partly seduced by a vain hope of more extensive usefulness; but my dear brother," he added, addressing Henry, "be assured that these conciliating measures are not sanctioned by our Master, who, in His often repeated warnings of the offence which should be taken, and the enmity excited, bid them be of good cheer, for that though 'in the world they should have tribulation,' in Him they should have peace. It is true," said he, replying to a remark which had been made on the popularity of certain faithful preachers, "that this is often the case; but then it is almost solely in populous towns, where the congregation

comes from all parts, perhaps but few from his own immediate parish; they choose such a minister because they find his preaching what they have been spiritually taught to value; but in a retired part of the country where every man has his own parish, and they have been in the habit of attending their parish-church regularly, the natural feelings of the people will quickly show themselves. Such as have been enabled by divine grace to 'receive the truth in love,' will hear the word with gladness of heart, and such as 'are ordained unto eternal life,' will believe, although at first they may oppose; but the world, which St. John described as 'lying in wickedness,' will rebel against the doctrine, and evince its own state of blindness and error by the dislike it manifests to the gospel preached and to the preacher. The world ever has been, and ever will continue, a rough and thorny road to the upright believer; but greater is He that is for them than he that is against them; and if the Master was content to suffer all things, should the servants expect ease and rest? Ah no! all our settled enjoyment, comfort, peace, and stability, must centre in Him; nothing else will satisfy the immortal soul—nothing but Christ himself will save and comfort the help-

less sianer ! My dear brother, we must ‘preach Christ,’ we must not fill our discourses with this appeal to the feelings of our hearers, and that address to their consciences, omitting the main subject ; but we must make the Saviour the Alpha and Omega ; His sacred name should be stamped on every single link of the chain that binds our discourse. Nothing else is worth bringing forward. We hear addresses in which He is twice or thrice mentioned as the foundation, the key-stone—but they form their arch without fitly joining the surrounding stones—you might shake them asunder, and the foundation, when laid, is forgotten by the time they have carried up the first story. Oh, my dear Sir, this will not do ! We find St. Paul bringing forward the name of Christ no less than eighteen times in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians ! He thought this was ‘a name above every name,’ at the mention of which ‘every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth,’ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ A pleasing gospel, which offers salvation to man upon certain conditions, will almost always be well received, or at least meet with little opposition ; but human nature is so proud and so

strangely compounded, that it rejects the idea of possessing no qualities which will recommend it to God. Tell the people that Jesus Christ will save them, provided they are willing to cast themselves upon His mercy, and will undertake to perform certain stipulations, repent of their transgressions, abstain from evil in future, follow that which is good, fulfil the law of God as far as in them lies, and render themselves acceptable (through Christ, they add) by the purity of their lives; and for the most part, the more reasonable body of hearers will close with these terms. They like to feel that they can do something for themselves, and are secretly gratified by the idea of aiding in some measure in working out their own salvation. But offer them a gospel upon pure Scripture terms, 'without money and without price,' and they will none of it. The most part carry their money in their hand, and if they may not buy it, they will not accept it. But should we, God's ministers, attempt to qualify and soften down His doctrines in order to meet the prejudices of the unconverted heart? God forbid! Whatever it may cost us to be faithful, and cost us much it must, 'to us it is given not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake;' mark the words, 'it is *given* us to

suffer ;' let us therefore expect it, and when it comes, welcome it as an evidence that Satan's kingdom is in danger, and that he is raising up a party against the light of truth."

"Do you not think," observed Mr. H. Conroy, "that there is perhaps an occasional rashness in bringing forward Calvinistic doctrines? I mean, don't you think that the making them too prominent is apt to excite an unnecessary degree of hostility in the mind of man? It appears to me, though indeed I would venture my opinions with diffidence, that these doctrines are calculated to foster pride and presumption in some cases, and to awaken the natural enmity of man to the gospel in a more than common measure."

"I remember," replied the rector, "to have been present once at a discussion which took place between a young English and Scotch divine." "Oh!" said Mr. Conroy, laughing and interrupting him, "I can guess how the argument went, the Scotch are all Calvinists, we know." "All professedly so, I believe, but I have heard very anti-calvinistic discourses from some of their clergy; however, I was going to relate that after much conversation, the Englishman acknowledged, that our church was assuredly professedly and inherently Cal-

vinistic in its formulary, articles, and doctrines. "And," said he, "after all, those doctrines which we dread to handle, and which it is necessary to bring forward with extreme caution, are the bulwarks of our church, and, in fact, the secret strength and consolation of all its sincere members; but," he added, lowering his voice, and speaking as if in fear of committing his private confessions to the walls, "it does not do to say all this," and nodding to myself, whom he supposed to hold the same opinions, "we must be wise as serpents; Eh!—we must not commit ourselves." I must confess, I thought it a singular creed which might serve to console and strengthen the preacher, but was carefully to be shut up from his hearers. And on the same ground, I would answer your objections; if those doctrines be truth, and founded solely on the word of God, I think they cannot be too often advanced, or become too prominent, as you fear. Let us take the scriptures and see what was the manner of the apostles in addressing their hearers. We have Paul's Epistle to the Romans, setting forth his own calling in Christ Jesus, and their election as saints.—That to the people of Corinth, is addressed to the 'sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints'—'anointed'—and 'sealed.'—To the Ephesians,

he expresses his gratitude for electing love, manifested to himself and them, in terms of grateful adoration, blessing God for all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; for being 'chosen in Him, before the foundation of the world'—'predestinated unto the adoption of children'—'accepted in the beloved,' having 'redemption through his blood'—'the forgiveness of sins,' and 'an inheritance' in Him.—He addresses the Colossians as 'saints reconciled unto God,' whom Christ would present, 'holy and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight,'—'complete in Him,' having been quickened with Him, and having had all their trespasses forgiven. He tells the Thessalonians, that the gospel coming to them, 'not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;' they must '*know their election of God.*' Timothy is exhorted to all constancy, being reminded that he is 'saved and called with a holy calling, not according to works, but according to God's own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus *before the world began.*'—Paul styles himself, when writing to Titus, 'an Apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect'—'in hope of eternal life, promised before the world began.'—Peter addresses his General Epistle to the 'elect

according to the foreknowledge of God the Father'—'begotten unto a lively hope'—'to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled— reserved in heaven for them 'who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'—His Second Epistle is to them 'who have obtained precious faith, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'—Jude addresses himself 'to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and called.'—St. John in his Epistles writes to those who have 'fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ'—whose 'sins are forgiven'—who 'have overcome the wicked one'—and who have an unction from the Holy One'—who are 'called the Sons of God,' and who shall be like Christ when he appears.—He also addresses 'the Elect Lady,' and mentions her "elect sister." Indeed we find the whole current of Scripture, from Moses to the Revelation inculcating these views: from all which concurring testimony it appears that we can have no ground for alarm in advancing doctrines which the Prophets and Apostles of our Lord appear to have made the foundation of their belief, and the subject of their ministry; indeed I cannot understand how any servant of Christ can feel himself justified in withhold-

ing them. We may go on to prune and fashion the gospel, till it bears no resemblance to that which was preached by our Lord and his immediate followers; and I think we shall discover, with very little observation, that the qualified and refined form under which it has too frequently been preached of late years, has tended in a most melancholy degree to the decay of real and vital godliness, and has substituted in its place a lifeless profession of religion, as different from that of the primitive Christians as it is barren in its effects and uninfluential in its operations. So far, my dear brother, from these doctrines inducing the consequences you apprehend, (presumption and pride,) I can assure you, on the experience of forty years' observation, that they are calculated in the highest degree to produce feelings of the deepest self-abasement and humility. It does not always answer to bring forward one's own personal experience, but if I may be allowed, without suspicion of prejudice, to allude to my own case, I can honestly affirm, before Almighty God, that I never knew what real lowliness of heart meant, or what genuine self-abhorrence and self-distrust implied, until by divine grace I was led to receive these doctrines. I could acknowledge my many transgressions, and lament my

failures, with bitter recollections. I could weep over my hardness of heart and rebellion of spirit, but there was a secret and hidden pride in all my lamentations, a feeling of dissatisfaction (unknown to myself) which writhed under the consciousness of failing in all my attempts to pacify my own mind, or to meet the demands of the law. I was unhappy and dissatisfied, yet anxious to please God, and to render myself in some way acceptable. I renewed my endeavours, but only to prove their inefficacy. I read that the Saviour's yoke was light and easy, but my perverse heart found little ease or rest in wearing it. About this time the Lord suffered me to be assailed by strong temptation, and after a severe and hopeless struggle, I found myself unequal to combat with its power. Exhausted by the continued effort, and I may say almost reckless, I found myself much in the case of the Israelites after obtaining possession of the promised land,—the Lord left some nations 'to prove Israel, without driving them out hastily, or delivering them into the hand of Joshua.' They were suffered to retain them in their vicinity, that they might see what was in their own hearts; and they quickly 'did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and the groves.' We cannot be left a moment to

ourselves, but we turn after the vanities and idolatries which the world bows down to; and the Lord suffers these masters to harass and distress; and even the spiritual Joshua seems no more to subdue our enemies for us: but when they cry unto Him, being 'greatly distressed,' He sends them a deliverer. This was my case at that time. I had been left to prove my own heart, and although already in possession of the promised inheritance, by right of promise, I could not enjoy my privileges because of sin and unbelief. A mighty Deliverer was then manifested to me—a Deliverer to subdue and drive out all my enemies. I found Him of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote, and was graciously favoured with such a view of His all-sufficiency, not only to save from destruction, but to strengthen, support, direct, and uphold, that I joyfully fled to Him for refuge, and willingly flung away the price I had carried in my hand to purchase His favour;—accepting His gracious offers of welcome, as a poor, tempted, empty, helpless sinner, and desiring henceforth to lie in the dust at his feet, never more to open my lips for shame. It is not the man who is set free from debt because he owed little, that loveth much, but he to whom much is forgiven. I could see my own unrighteousness then as I

never saw it before ; but I saw it all ‘ cast behind His back,’ ‘ blotted out,’ and no more remembered against me ; therefore while I felt I was ‘ not worthy that He should enter under my roof,’ I acknowledged His power, willingness, and mercy, and rejoiced with joy unspeakable.”

Mr. H. Conroy asked if he understood him right in saying, that he had previously to this, known something of real religion.

“ I knew enough of the gospel to assure my own mind at this moment, that I had saving faith. I am persuaded that had I died at that period, I should have found acceptance through Jesus Christ, because I certainly was enlightened by the Spirit of God, but the light within was very dim, and my views of the atonement exceedingly erroneous, as I mentioned before ; for I mixed up with his finished work, so much of my own performances in one shape or another, that salvation literally became a joint operation between the creature and the Creator. The consequence was, that I was at heart, although unknown to myself, indulging a spirit of self-righteousness at variance with the gospel. At times I enjoyed some settled peace and satisfaction, and I believe that God, who deals very tenderly with his people, allowed me to walk in a smooth road for a season ; but I was

to be shaken out of self, and be effectually emptied of all my refuges, and wiped as the Lord wiped out Jerusalem, 'as a man wipeth out a dish,'—that I might be enabled to see the Saviour in his fulness, and draw from and live upon 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' What I formerly knew of him might be compared to the knowledge of a person's character received from authentic information, what I have since known to that of personal and intimate acquaintance. He was then my hope of glory; he is now, I trust, my daily portion, my hourly, momentary stay; my advocate with the Father; my 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.' What full and glorious promises for man! What is there, in short, in heaven or earth, that Christ is not to us? How can any one imagine, for a single moment, that the reception of these views encourages pride and presumption? They lay them in the dust! together with all the empty, vain, and sinful productions of man! no one can draw near infinite purity without partaking of that Spirit; no one can behold 'as in a glass the glory of the Lord without being changed into the same image.' A sight of the Saviour in his character and offices of King, Priest, and Teacher to his people, excites all that is best, and purest, and holiest in the

renewed nature of man, and opens our eyes to the pollution and worthlessness of the human heart. To use a common illustration; When two objects are presented to our view, the one beautiful, and good, and perfect in itself, the other paltry, and worthless, and unsightly, do we not instantly covet the fair and valuable, and reject the other as unworthy our possession or regard? Thus it is with religion: convince a man that there is something desirable, and lovely, and better than all he has ever yet discovered, and he will instantly go in search of it. But man unfortunately is in general too well satisfied with the good things which he finds in the world, to part with them for uncertain advantages; and, as it is not in the power of human argument to convince, but is the sole office of the Holy Spirit, he retains his idols and neglects his God."

"If you will not think me very perverse in maintaining my own opinions," said Mr. Conroy, "I would ask, Why may we not expect to enjoy the same happiness in our reliance on the Saviour, and an equal degree of self-abasement as regards ourselves, without holding those views which I must still think tend to excite great, and perhaps unnecessary offence in the minds of men?"

“As to your maintaining your own sentiments, my dear Sir, I think you perfectly right to do so until you see differently; but as to enjoying equal happiness, and possessing equally lowly notions of our own capabilities, the thing is utterly impossible. For so long as we are not assured, by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, that we have an unalienable title to everlasting life, and a claim to all the promises of scripture, treasured up in Jesus Christ, with a certainty of their being ensured to us without any dependance on ourselves, it is an absolute contradiction to talk of happiness; moments of enjoyment, as I before observed, may be possessed, and occasional seasons of comfort; but withdraw the sensible influence which was acting in our minds, and the poor distressed believer has no secure hold on any of his former reliances. “Oh, if I could ever be assured,” I remember once hearing a minister say most feelingly, “Oh, if I could ever be assured that my getting to heaven depended upon my own watchfulness, my own prayerfulness, my own activity and exertion,—I should never have another happy day while I was in this body.” To be left, as it were, to our own resources, requires no common measure of faith, and I defy that man to call himself truly happy

who doubts of his security, and hardly dares approach his Maker, because he finds none of that grace within, which he had fancied just before was a recommendation to His favour. I do not mean to say that any one is exempt at all periods from trials of unbelief; I suppose every one has more or less experienced doubts and darkness; but I can confidently assert, that strong faith secures real and almost unvarying happiness; while a belief which is partly dependant on our own state of feeling, is liable to be shaken by every change, and altogether lost, as far as the comfort of it goes, during seasons of strong temptation. With regard to our possessing lowly notions of ourselves, this also without clear views of the gospel is impossible; how can persons who are looking to themselves for different graces, and striving to recommend themselves to God by their own endeavours, be supposed to possess genuine humility? Should we consider that man truly humble who persisted in his attempts to prove to us that he was qualified for some office, of which we were fully informed he was utterly incapable from natural inability and acquired habit? I think not. How then can an impotent and corrupt creature imagine himself giving proof of humility, when he is pursuing

a similar line of conduct towards his Creator ? who, aware of his helplessness, and conscious of his state of destitution, as regards his ability to render him any right service, has provided an all-sufficient Saviour, who has wrought out a perfect obedience, fulfilled all righteousness, secured to his people eternal life, and prepared for them a place in heaven. But this will not satisfy the poor benighted creature: he must be *doing something towards the work himself*; he cannot be happy unless he has a share in it; he hears of the law being fulfilled; but he cannot believe it;—no! he must strive and strain till he fancies he is helping the Lord in the work. He reads that eternal life is secured to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is persuaded that he has had this faith granted to him; but this will not do; he must perform certain duties, and purify his heart to a particular point, and then he thinks his salvation secure, Christ being brought in to make up all deficiencies.”

Mr. H. Conroy asked, how he received these words, ‘use all diligence to make your calling and election sure.’

The old Rector smiled, and answered, “It seems to me next to impossible to render any meaning but one; we all know, by sad experi-

ence of our own hearts, and I think, my dear brother, you will agree with me, that were we required to ensure either, by our fulfilment of the commands of God, we should assuredly fix our sentence the other way. Election, again, implies a previous determination, the choosing an object for some particular purpose, and certainly if, as we are told, the names of believers were written in the book of life before the world was, they could have little to do with it, save, when the time came for electing grace to be displayed in their calling, to acknowledge the gracious dispensation with all thankfulness, and to endeavour, by every exertion, to walk worthy of their high calling. We are exhorted to use all diligence in making it sure, or in clearer words, to assure our own hearts of our great privilege, to leave no means untried of ascertaining this important point, to use all diligence of inquiry in establishing a fact so consolatory in its evidence, and so influential in its operation on our conduct. We find numberless passages in scripture bearing upon this subject. St. Paul anxiously desires that the Colossians might be comforted, their hearts being knit together in love, unto all the riches of the *full assurance* of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the

Father, and of Christ.' And he has another very powerful passage in the third of Ephesians, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.' This last clause seems to me singularly forcible, in that by the reception of the truth in its purity, by the force of a faith which should convince us of the abounding love of Christ, we should be filled with all the fulness of God! purified of our dross, elevated above self and its mortal corruption, and 'strengthened with might in the inner man;' God dwelling in us, and we in him! Truly assurance is a delightful gift! a most animating, influential conviction, which is derived from God alone, and held by us with firmness and comfort proportioned to our faith. But although the experienced believer is supposed, at all times, to be persuaded of his interest in Christ; his sensible perception of it may be much dimmed, when under temptation or overcome by sin. We may suppose the giving diligence to make our calling sure, to infer also, that we must live in nearness to Christ, so as to produce those

fruits which are the work of the Spirit in our hearts, for without them we cannot expect to possess the comfort of this assurance; the Holy Ghost refuses to give His consolations when we are refusing to seek His influence. At such times he suffers darkness and clouds of unbelief to intercept our enjoyment: therefore we should not only strive to be well established in doctrine, but to be diligent in cultivating those graces of the Spirit, which are graciously permitted to be a means of assuring our own hearts of the blessed effects of the doctrines, which, when fully received, produce such evidences."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a stranger, and Mary and her brother took their leave.

On the way home, Mary appeared silent and thoughtful; her brother asked the subject of her reflections. "I was thinking of that excellent old man, and, I believe, foolishly wishing that it had been my lot to have been blessed with such a minister, for I cannot help supposing, that I should have made greater advances, had this been the case. I know his character to be so unimpeachable, and I think him so heavenly-minded and so delightful, that ——" "Mary, my dear, don't you know, that "that man is a very great sinner." Mary laughed at her bro-

ther's well applied remark. "I hope, however, that he will talk on Tuesday evening. I am so pleased that he consented to come." "Have you fixed on a subject for conversation, Mary?" "I fixed? that is not my business, Henry, you must arrange all this." "Very well then, I think we will have an argument whether the preaching of Calvinistic doctrines does not tend to licentiousness: will this subject suit, Mary?" Mary smiled, and thought it would, and so it was agreed.

On reaching the house, they found that Mrs. Wilmot and her two daughters had been calling in their absence, and left a message with the elder Mr. Conroy, respecting the party to see the pictures; which, owing to some unavoidable occurrence, was to be delayed to the following week; the morning after the day on which what her brother called "Mary's Soirée" was to be held. The uncle meantime advanced, and with a significant smile presented his nephew with something very carefully enveloped in silver paper, which, on opening, he perceived to be another attempt to render his church immortal; he looked over it, and turning away, gave a sigh of hopelessness. Both Mary and her uncle laughed heartily, in which after a time he found himself constrained to join.

"Is not it hard that I am forced to accept these girls' drawings, whether I will or not, when I so positively refused? I declare it is quite stupid of them."

"Stupid! my dear nephew, any thing but that; they want to secure your good wishes, and think these little attentions the best way to attain their object."

"They take a wrong method, for I cannot be teased with such kindnesses; there is nothing annoys me so much as that sort of thing."

"I tell you what, my dear Henry, there is nothing would annoy you more than not meeting with some of these attentions: it is all very well to feel teased by some little extra civilities; but you would feel very much surprised, not to say disappointed, if you found yourself excluded from them altogether:—come, come, I must take the poor young ladies' part, they certainly meant well, but they ought to know better than to torment and tease a gentleman's life out with their injudicious and unasked-for civilities! such errors are not to be excused or palliated; I would tell them so, lest they incur the indignation of all the single gentlemen in the neighbourhood!" This was said with the uncle's well-understood tone of satire, and Henry said something in explanation, to which the

other replied, that they must some day commence the discussion they were to have, bearing on the subject of celibacy, &c. Mary changed the conversation, by inquiring if her uncle had heard where Cora Wilmot was, that she had not accompanied her mother and sisters. He had heard them say, that she was well, but knew no further.

CHAPTER XVIII.

‘CALL UNTO ME, AND I WILL ANSWER THEE, AND SHEW
THEE GREAT AND MIGHTY THINGS, WHICH THOU KNOWEST
NOT.’—Jer. xxxiii. 3.

‘THE SOUL OF THE DILIGENT SHALL BE MADE FAT.’

Prov. xiii. 4.

TOWARDS evening, Mary, having left her uncle and brother together, took a walk across some fields leading towards Mrs. Wilmot's residence. She had not gone far, when she saw some one seated on an old stump of a tree, and approaching nearer, was greatly pleased to find Cora Wilmot quietly examining a paper she held in her hands; on hearing a footstep, she turned and recognised Mary with an expression of much satisfaction. After a little time she took up her paper, telling Mary that she had written down several difficulties she had found since their first evening's conversation, and was just then looking them over, and wishing

for an opportunity of stating them to her. She said, that she had had a very long discussion with Mr. Forbes that morning, and although he had argued against the opinions she wished to adopt, she was thankful that she had not been shaken by his arguments.

Mary asked some questions about the conversation; her friend replied, that when he called, she happened to be employed in searching the scriptures for texts which treated of the perseverance of the people of God; and, on applying to him for assistance, he gave her to understand that the doctrine was an unsafe one, and liable to lead to much evil. This surprised her; as she had already found many passages which seemed to establish it; and she ventured to point them out to him, and to ask in what way they tended to evil. He answered, that although no one would distinctly deny that the point was tenable from Scripture, yet he considered it an unsafe doctrine to be unguardedly held. He thought no individual was justified in deeming himself secure from eventually falling away from grace; and said he should consider any one who held such a notion extremely presumptuous. Cora added, "He went so far as to say, that he should almost hesitate about associating much with any one

who thought in this way ; and when I said that I was examining the Bible expressly for the purpose of establishing my belief in that and other points of a similar nature, he positively looked at me with astonishment ; he was too civil to express his thoughts, but I dare say he considers me very wrong-headed. He was at great pains to shake my confidence, and I believe might have succeeded in some degree, had I not found Scripture on my side, and felt so much more happy and at ease in my mind, since I began to see differently. He would scarcely believe me when I assured him that I hoped soon to be enabled to hold those opinions without any doubt. He said he hoped I would forgive him if he made one observation, which was, that he had often made the remark, that those who took up these high doctrines were generally *females*. I could not help smiling at the idea ; but fortunately it occurred to me to bring forward that striking passage in the first of Corinthians, ‘ God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence.’ I believe he seemed a little ashamed of his

remark, for he coloured and made me no reply. However I would not let the subject drop, but next mentioned to him another text equally forcible, that in Christ Jesus 'there is neither male nor female,' but all are one in Him; and I said that God was no respecter of persons, but would, I trusted, lead all who sought his direction into the sure and right path. To this he assented, adding, that it was necessary in seeking guidance, not only to exercise our own judgments, but to attend to the opinions of those who had made the subject their peculiar study. I told him that I wished to make the Scriptures my chief study, but that I had been recommended Luther's work on the Galatians, and I found it very useful and instructive. He of course made no objection to the great Reformer, but he cautioned me most strongly against error in opinion, and asked from whence I had imbibed what he called my peculiar notions. I did not think it necessary to tell him, but I said that the subject had engaged my attention very much for some time, and that I was diligently searching the Scriptures for confirmation of what I had heard. He answered that no doubt I might find several passages favouring my peculiar views, but that it was necessary, in order to form a just opinion, to take the context

and then decide. I said I wished to do so, and for this purpose had carefully gone through the gospel of St. John, the Acts, and Paul's first five Epistles, the result of which was, that I was in each succeeding chapter more and more convinced that the doctrines revealed in them were such as I trusted God was enabling me to receive, and such as appeared to me calculated in every respect to lead the Christian to holiness and to eternal peace. He heard me very patiently, I must confess, and I do not know whether I was most surprised at my own courage in speaking as I did, or at his forbearance in listening to me; for it certainly must seem rather out of place for a young woman to give an opinion in opposition to one who makes it his business to study the subject."

Mary was much interested in the conversation, and quite pleased to find that her friend, with all her natural timidity, had maintained her own opinions so firmly.

"But now," said Cora, taking up her paper, "let me tell you my own private difficulties:—I have, as I told Mr. Forbes, carefully read St. John's gospel, the Acts, and several of St. Paul's epistles, besides much of the Old Testament, for since I saw how blindly I had been going on, the whole word of God seems to me full

of nothing but promises of peace and joy to believers, and I never can read enough of it. Yet I am ashamed to say that many of my former doubts and fears return to perplex me. I was quite miserable the other day with the idea, that perhaps I never was a child of God, and had no right to all those promises, which at other times appear to me so full of consolation. I want you to tell me how I am to get rid of these wretched fears when they haunt me."

Mary asked if she felt any of them at present, and was answered in the negative.

"How do you know that you are in a more safe state now than you were the other day?"

"I do not know that I have any reason for my present confidence, but I certainly feel very happy and full of hope, although I cannot assign any positive cause."

Mary pointed out to her the uncertain nature of her confidence, explaining that it was evident she trusted to certain feelings, which were liable to fluctuate; whereas if she could lay hold of scripture, and rely simply and solely on its assurances, she would have a safe ground of confidence, and a strong foundation of hope, which would stand against the attacks of Satan and unbelief.

"That is precisely what I need," said her

friend, "for as long as I feel my mind at peace, and find myself delighting in the service of God, I am quite happy; but the moment I feel a deadness in prayer, and a want of enjoyment in spiritual things, my former misery returns: and yet, surely a Christian ought not to be happy, or even wish to be so, as long as his heart seems dead, and he finds no evidence of real religion within."

Mary smiled, and assured her friend that if her happiness was to depend upon internal evidence, there would be times when her wretchedness would amount to despair. She endeavoured to make her see upon what an insecure foundation she was resting, and asked if she was allowed to continue in a state of apparent lifelessness and barrenness for a length of time, what means she would resort to for recovery.

Her friend hardly knew what to answer. She said, she had frequently been rendered very unhappy by that sort of trial, but she had generally found it pass away, at least in a measure, on her endeavouring to be more diligent in the use of means. In reply to the supposition of the trial not eventually being removed, but rather increasing, as was in some instances the case, Cora acknowledged, that she should then be utterly unable to think of

any remedy. Mary asked, where then would be her faith, or what would have become of all her confidence? Her friend said, she felt assured she should not, with her increased light and knowledge of scripture, despair of her final salvation, though, in the mean time, she might be rendered wholly incapable of any comfort.

“Do you not see now,” said Mary, “that you are putting aside the work of Christ, and desiring to substitute in its place something of your own. You forget that he wrought out a perfect righteousness for us, and that we are presented to the Father *complete in Him*. You know that He is an all-sufficient Saviour, and yet you wish to find some sufficiency in yourself, that you may go and boast of the hand you had in the work! Can this be pleasing to God, who has graciously provided us with a righteousness of His own? Do we not read in the forty-fifth of Isaiah, that, ‘in the Lord we have righteousness and strength,’ and again, in the fifty-fourth, ‘Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord;’—and we are called ‘trees of righteousness,’ the planting of the Lord. It is therefore very evident, that we are not expected to present ourselves in any righteousness of our own; and indeed the whole tenor of scripture is strongly expressive of an imputed and justify-

ing righteousness, by which it is easy to see, that man is considered altogether incompetent; and it would be little short of madness in him to set himself up with the notion that he could ever assist in the most minute particular towards clothing himself in a garment of righteousness."

Cora acknowledged the truth of this, but wished to know what was to be done when we felt more than usually disinclined to what was right: "are we to content ourselves in that state without making exertions after a better?"

Mary assured her that such an idea would be quite inadmissible to a truly enlightened Christian: "No, my dear friend, those who are taught of God can never rest satisfied at a distance from him; it is a melancholy proof of our declension when we can feel easy under such a situation; but let us see the means by which those who are mourning over their deadness may become alive again to God. We are expressly given to understand, that (as we have already seen) a righteousness has been provided, upon the supposition of man's utter incapability of offering any for himself, it is therefore our duty to lay claim to the substitute; and in so doing we must remember that we have renounced all pretension to any thing of our own. Now we find we have a justifying righteousness

which frees us from all fears of condemnation ; it next becomes our anxious desire to obey those precepts which follow the reception of the doctrines, and are enjoined by all the Apostles as evidence of the fair fruit which ‘ trees of the Lord’s planting ’ should bring forth. Here our Lord has graciously furnished us with abundant comfort, ‘ Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they *shall be filled.*’ And mark ! he has not only provided us with a righteousness in which we stand justified, but as every good gift is ascribed to him in the Word of God, we know that the desires which we feel after holiness are his implanting ; consequently we may be certain that they shall be answered ; and in the words just quoted we find the positive assurance that ‘ they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, shall be filled.’ Filled with what ? you may ask ; not certainly with any thing commendable of our own, but with such longings after Christ, such earnest desires for nearer access to him, such strong anxiety after conformity to his will, and such aspirations for further manifestations of him in his various offices, that we shall feel constrained to acknowledge that we ourselves have had nothing to do in it, but that the all-sufficient and all-satisfying Saviour was fulfilling his own word in us. This is

the view which, thank God, I have been enabled to take of the subject, and I trust you may find as much peace and satisfaction from the reception of these truths as I have done. But we must become as bankrupts before we attain this length. I always wish to remember that the house has stopped payment, so that whenever I would be taking out my banker's book, I might recollect that my check was useless. Yet although we find a failure in every human and earthly quarter, there is an unsearchable store of riches laid up in Christ, upon which we may draw to eternity, and find that, the larger our demands, the more ready he is to satisfy them."

Cora Wilmot expressed herself satisfied on the point of righteousness, and they spoke of doubts and fears in general, with the means of overcoming them. Mary said "she never found any plan succeed but going immediately to the Word of God. Satan had so many ways of influencing that he could overturn our best arguments, if they were not drawn from our Lord's own assurances. It will not do," she added, "to urge any thing of our own, not even our faith, for he is so subtle, so skilled in argument, that he can shake us out of every thing we fancy we possess; neither our faith, nor our renunciation of self, nor our desires after holiness, nor

our love of the Saviour, will stand us in any stead to silence so able and artful a fiend ; he can persuade us that we have in fact none of the evidences which we have been urging. I find nothing will serve but a steady view of the Lord's imputed and justifying righteousness: from this there is no appeal. Satan may prove to us that all we do, and think, and feel, is sin, and that God is a holy God, and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and consequently cannot be reconciled to us : the argument is a strong one, and very staggering to any one much oppressed by a consciousness of sin ; but if we can press against his insinuations, the argument that our sins no longer separate between us and God, Christ having paid the debt and removed them ; and that we do not pretend to the assumption of any righteousness of our own, having been furnished with a perfect one by God himself, to this he has no answer."

"Ah," said Cora, "this is very well for you to do, but I cannot always resist his temptations. I feel that I have so little faith and so little strength."

"Does not our Lord say, 'if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye could remove mountains;' and as to your deficiency of strength,

are we not told that 'in the Lord we have righteousness and strength.' We are too apt to look to ourselves for what we should seek from our heavenly Father. It is long before we can understand and act upon the conviction that our work is with Him, and not with ourselves. We are ever ready when temptations assault and new sins are discovered, to set ourselves to root out the evil; we think we will take measures to make ourselves better—we will conquer such and such propensities, and overcome this inclination, and guard against that failure—all very genuine intentions, but proceeding from a wrong source."

Cora asked what she meant by "*our work being with God and not with ourselves*"—"are we not ourselves concerned in the work?"

"Certainly we are most materially; but what I mean is, that instead of looking into self, for purposes of amendment, we should (at least I speak from my own experience, for I do not pretend to be a teacher to any one) bear in mind, that our bank has stopped payment, and direct our eyes to the only inexhaustible source whence we may draw with full security, and feel that our demands are answered with alacrity. In all our difficulties, in every trial, amidst every temptation, our business, as I

said before, is with our covenant Head, and *not with self.*”

“But,” said her friend Cora, “do you totally exclude self? can we forget that we have a being in ourselves?”

“Unfortunately we cannot! it would be well for us if we could ever bear in mind that our life is ‘hid with Christ in God,’ but this can never be fully attained on earth; all I mean is, that in every situation, and under every peculiarity of circumstance, we should believe ourselves wholly incapable of any good, and carry our complaints and our difficulties to the Saviour, trusting Him to teach us how to act in our perplexity—calling upon Him to give us right opinions and clear judgments—and confiding in Him to mould us entirely for Himself: so that like the clay in the hand of the artist, or wax beneath the seal, we should take any form, or receive any impression that His wisdom saw expedient.”

“I think I understand this now very clearly,” said Cora, “but I am afraid that it will be some time before I act upon it entirely.”

Mary asked if she were so pleased with the trial of her own powers, that she would prefer trusting them to going to her Saviour.

“Pleased with my own powers!” said Cora,

shaking her head, "I never made much of them; and now that I see the sin of seeking for any sufficiency in self, I think I may say I abhor the idea of it; but still, spite of all this, unbelief is so strong, that at times I seem almost to depend upon the very source which at others I confess to be perfect emptiness. I cannot help thinking how differently we should act if we had a friend who had often deceived us, and whose offers of assistance we knew to be treacherous; how resolute we should be in rejecting his offered aid, and how carefully we should avoid communicating with him again! but here is the idol self, as you call it, always deceiving and always failing us, and still we trust it! it certainly is very difficult to believe. I could not help remarking the words of our Lord, as I read them this morning, 'Oh fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken.'

"Slow indeed," said Mary, "we forget that if our Saviour sought us before we sought him, it is not likely that he should reject us when we seek after him—but I believe we never know any thing of simple trust, easy as it appears when described, until we have first been taught the utter insufficiency of self."

"I am sure that is very true, for although the

gospel always seemed to me an inestimable blessing, since I understood something of its nature, yet no one can tell how many miserable hours I have known, which, had I seen these doctrines with clearness, never could have been the case ; but I do hope it will not be so again ; at least I think I am better prepared with a remedy. You say you go at once to the throne of grace with all your difficulties, do you not ? ” Mary replied that she always wished to do so. Cora asked if she ever felt particularly inclined to indulge in any thing that her conscience told her was not right. She was answered in the affirmative. “ But of course you are so far advanced that you don’t feel the world any temptation to you.” Mary asked what she meant by the world. “ An agreeable party—intellectual conversation—music, and similar things, which I suppose have no power to draw your thoughts aside.” Her friend assured her she too frequently found the veriest trifles sufficient to withdraw her affections from better objects. “ Intellectual conversation I must own I find particularly attractive—and music has great power over my mind. I could tell you of many other allurements which would become very ensnaring at times, if my heavenly Father did not preserve me from their influence.”

Cora Wilmot said, she had always understood that very pious persons had no enjoyment of worldly amusements.

"Perhaps I am not a very pious person," said Mary with a sigh, "but I should be sorry to increase the sum of my guilt by withholding the truth. I know that my heart is still so unsubdued, so worthless and prone to love the world, that were I to see any great actress as Catherine of Arragon, Jane Shore, or Lady Macbeth, I should, I fear, feel most intensely interested. God forbid that I should ever be induced to make the experiment! but I am confident of the momentary effect, whatever might be my feelings afterwards."

"But," said Cora, "do you think you could feel easy in your mind while you were witnessing scenes in which the honour of God was set at nought or disregarded?"

"I hope not very easy in my mind. I have no doubt that my conscience would give me very severe stings, and that my reflections afterwards would be very painful, supposing that my mind was not hardened, as it probably would be before that I could consent to go; yet I can imagine that the *old nature* would receive gratification from its former enjoyments. With regard to music, I own that I see no harm in it,

provided it be enjoyed, as all things with the Christian should be, in a lawful and moderate degree. I consider that we are responsible beings, and have to account for time and talents, but I also know that relaxation is necessary for man, and I think that we may very innocently partake of those things which are given us *richly to enjoy*, provided they do not become hindrances in the way of our advancement, of which every individual must judge for himself."

"Do you think that no person ever arrives at that state of devotedness that he loses all interest in earthly things?"

"I suppose, as all things are possible with God, he can and does sometimes so subdue the old man in the renewed creature, that he has little further interest in them; but as this is entirely the gift of God, and wholly contrary to our nature, man can claim no merit in the work: and we must not set up any thing which is not God, or ascribe glory where there is none: or the creature presently falls and shows us what is in him. However, I am far from thinking lightly of those who have been enabled to reach these heights. I honour persons so distinguished, as bearing the strong impress of the Saviour's hand, and I long to be filled with the same influential spirit. I do not say that I imagine those who are per-

mitted to remain exempt from strong temptation and trials of unbelief, are more the objects of divine favour than others who do not appear to enjoy such unclouded peace, for in this case I should except some of the most eminent Scripture saints,—but I consider their state a most enviable one. Yet if we are faithful and simple in our trust, the Friend of sinners will supply the need of each as His sovereign wisdom judges best.”

“I have been often perplexed,” said Cora, “to hear others speaking of the world, as if it had no possible power over their minds, when I knew from their actions that they really appeared to be under its influence:—how do you account for this?”

“I used to feel perplexed on the same point, but I believe I understand it a little better now—they are, I fear, ignorant of their own hearts, and ignorant of what secretly influences them. I am persuaded that in many instances they are so desirous of mortifying a worldly spirit, and so anxious to be found devoted to God alone, that they become blind to their real state, and persuade themselves and others that they feel what they wish to feel—whereas, in many cases, if each heart would speak its own secrets, the old man of sin would tell frightful things of worldliness, unbelief, and rebellion.

I am confident that no human being can in his heart despise the attractions of life, which appear all in all to his unrenewed heart, without possessing a very large share of the love of Christ—such a portion of that love as will drown the affection for inferior objects—and can it be possible that persons walking in their own shadows, (for it is nothing else,) and knowing little of the all-sufficiency and love of Christ, can divest themselves of their natural cleavings, and lose all interest in their former idols ? ”

Cora Wilmot thought not : “ and now,” said she, “ that my mind is settled about this point, will you tell me if I am never to expect to get rid of my sinful inclinations :—have you not been set free from yours ? ”

Mary said that the last expression was something like a correct one, but she could not comfort her by saying that sin was not following her at every turn. “ Nevertheless,” she added, “ we are assured that ‘ sin shall not have dominion over us ; ’ and why ? because ‘ we are not under the law, but under grace.’ You say you feel much more disposed to make exertions in every way to avoid sin, and to grow in all the fruits of holiness, since you understood the doctrines of free grace : and I can only say that, in proportion as we grow in the knowledge.

of Christ, sin will lose its power and become eclipsed in His stupendous glories; but we must cultivate with *all diligence* the *knowledge* of *him*, and endeavour at each moment to live upon his fulness, for when not abiding in him it must be either misery or apostacy:—there is no such thing as enjoyment when the Lord is taken away and we know not where he is.”

“ You did not tell me,” said Cora, “ if you felt free from the dominion of sin yourself ? ”

“ No ! my dear friend, nor do I ever expect to attain that state of bliss on this side eternity.”

“ Oh ! I do not mean entirely free,—I know that is not to be expected,—but I mean, does not a sense of the love of Christ, and a knowledge of his grace and favour, incline you to think lightly of earth, and, in proportion, to prize heavenly things ? ”

“ I have great fear of talking of self in any way, for I find it such an idol, that I do not often bring it forward. I have observed in myself, and in most others who dwell on self to the obscuring of the right object, very much of the spirit of creature-exaltation. I think we have so much of this feeling in regard to our infatuated attachment to self, that we would rather say or hear evil, than that the idol should stand forgotten or neglected. However, to reply to

your question touching 'the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' which it is said no one loving the Father can love, I will explain to you, as far as I myself understand, the victory which faith is said by the same Apostle to gain over the world. Of course, no one studying his Bible can imagine that the heart of man is ever entirely cleansed while he is a sojourner on earth. Some of the old 'chambers of imagery,' the 'nests of unclean birds,' are suffered to remain to the last, but a fair portion seems swept and garnished for the master's use—in this temple the Spirit of God is said to dwell when he manifests himself to his people. Here we will suppose all the virtues and graces of the Spirit to grow, and in proportion as they thrive and spread their lovely branches abroad, we may imagine the dark and gloomy chambers to be screened from observation. But sudden hurricanes overtake them—or a long season of drought—or wintry days—and the leaves fall off, and the hidden recesses again become visible. They had never been removed, but only concealed for a time : so that when the covering was taken away, there they were, in their former deformity ! and thus it is with man. Let him see himself as utterly worthless, helpless, and altogether incapable of any

thing good ; let him see Christ in his glorious characters of Saviour, Mediator, Priest, and King, the author and finisher of his faith ; and let him by faith realise his interest in him in this way, and live in nearness of access to him, and it is impossible that earthly things should chain down his affections ! He has a new life given him in Christ Jesus, which, in proportion to its animation of being, (if this is an expression that will give my meaning,) seems to undermine the existence of the old ; consequently, in the same degree that I find my ' life hid with Christ in God,' do I become dead to the body of sin and death ; for being ' risen with Christ,' I ' seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.' But if we take another view of the case, and suppose the believer (I make use of this word, for no one who has not been born of the Spirit of God, and been taught to believe in Christ, can feel any real concern in these questions,) to be dwelling much on his own sins, and thus getting into a dissatisfied, dispirited state, by which he impeaches the Mediatorial character of Christ ; or that he is resting on his own performances, and leaning to something in self, (to the elation of his own spirit and disregard of his Master's glory) ; or that he is turning away his eyes from the source

of his spiritual being, forgetting that his strength is in the Lord, and thus preparing himself to fall by the first temptation that presents itself in the shape of a favourite attraction. In all these situations, the believer is under the influence of natural feelings, aided by the suggestions of Satan, and the old man of sin speedily revives again, and threatens to destroy the new creation. But as God's faithfulness is unmoveable, therefore though 'the just man falleth seven times he riseth up again;' for we are assured in numberless passages that the chosen people of God shall never utterly fall. Nevertheless they have frequently been permitted to wander, and to fall into deep and dangerous sin, to the distress and anguish of their own minds, and the dishonour of God; in proof of which we have only to read the history of the Old Testament saints; from which I think you will agree with me in the conviction that *the heart remains to the end 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'* Also that we have no security in listening to any thing it says, or attending to its treacherous insinuations—for its nature is evil, and its ways deceit. It is a blessed thing to know this, and to avoid communication with it—shunning it as one would an acquaintance who had betrayed us again and again."

Cora Wilmot said she felt the truth of all that her friend said, and while she listened to her, she thought she could act upon her knowledge, but she dreaded trusting herself.

“And why should you trust yourself; is not this the very point we have been examining—is not self the very thing you ought not to trust!”

Her friend continued—“Oh, but I am so very weak, and so helpless, and so full of sin, no one can have an idea how sinful I am!”

“I have a very distinct idea,” said Mary, “but I long for the day when I shall hear you talk less of your disease, and more of the Physician; we think of our sins, and talk of our sins, till nothing else is present to us, but our own misery. What should we think of a person who brooded for ever over his disease, and neglected to go to the Physician, when he might be instantly healed. And this is precisely our case—we hear of a Physician able and willing to heal all who go to him, and yet we stand idling our time, and wasting our energy, in vain speculations! We do not do as the merchant in the gospel, who was seeking goodly pearls, and, ‘when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.’ We hear of the precious treasure, but cannot resolve to part with what

we have, in order to possess it ; we are willing to make some sacrifices, but not all ; we will submit to privations, endure mortifications, practise much self-denial in one particular shape, but to give up our own heart's best creations is not in us to do. . We are too strongly chained and bound to self to believe it necessary to upset all these idols. We would have ' the pearl of great price,' but still retain the paltry artificial imitations, with which we have been accustomed to deck our own persons. It is not easy to see ourselves ' Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked ; ' although the Word of God paints us in no other character, counselling us for our own sakes, to look elsewhere ; ' I counsel thee to buy of *me* gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.' Can any thing be stronger than this ? Here we have a perfect analysis of self, and what is it ? Wretchedness !—misery !—poverty !—blindness !—nakedness !—and yet out of this condemned, rejected, useless pile of waste lumber, we madly hunt for something serviceable ! Out

of wretchedness we want to extract comfort ; out of misery, splendour ; out of poverty affluence ; out of blindness, clearness of vision ; out of nakedness, richness of attire ! Is it possible to reflect seriously on the subject for a moment, and not perceive the gross folly and absurdity of our expectations, as well as the criminality of such ideas ! ”

Cora Wilmot thought she saw the point very clearly, but still she said, she feared she should have many severe conflicts before she could arrive at wisdom’s door.

“ Ah my dear friend, you may well say so, it must cost us many a sharp trial ; but of this we may confidently assure ourselves, that until we have learnt to cease from self, as an impediment to our progress in the divine life, we shall never enjoy permanent happiness. It is said, ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed in thee’ and every one who has been in some measure emptied of self, and taught to have his mind stayed on Christ, as his all-sufficient Saviour, will gratefully acknowledge that the promise has been most faithfully fulfilled to him.

“ But then, Miss Conroy (for you see I must bring in my *buts*) how am I to get rid of self,

and stay my mind on the Saviour? I can't do it; I can't cease from sin; and I can't fix my thoughts on heaven!"

"No! of course you cannot; no one ever could: is not this the point we have been discussing?"

"But what am I to do? how am I ever to grow in grace?"

"Never! so long as you are trying to 'bring a clean thing out of an unclean,' for Job says no one can do this; but you must go to Christ as the centurion did, beseeching him to 'say in a word and his servant would be healed;' or as the blind man who cried after Jesus, notwithstanding the disciples rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David;' and what was the result? Our Lord stood still, and called him to him, and said, 'What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?' and hearing that he desired to receive his sight, he had compassion on him, and immediately opened his eyes; after which, we are told that he *followed Jesus*. The blind sinner no sooner saw his Saviour than he followed him! What a gracious encouragement is this to us! that on going to him with our diseases to be healed, with our difficulties to be assisted, with our

sins to be forgiven, with our weakness to be strengthened, with our burdens to be sustained, He not only gives instant and full attention to our call, but grants our petition, heals our wound, and gives us ability to follow him. Next comes that blessed assurance, 'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' So that by going to Jesus, and seeking to have our eye fixed on him, we have the promise of light to guide us under all circumstances—a promise that meets every objection, for if Christ be 'the light of men' and this light is given unto us, we may well take up the Apostle's words and say, 'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?'—'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is *God that justifieth.*' 'Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Consequently neither your sin nor your weakness, nor your difficulties, nor your temptations, nor your unbelief, nor your hardness of heart, nor your trials, be they what they may, shall be able to separate you from the love of

God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. I am sure this is consolation and encouragement enough to fill us with songs of gratitude for years to come; and we will take leave of each other for the present as it is growing late, and may our heavenly Father and blessed Lord send down his gracious Spirit to quicken our earthly souls!"

CHAPTER XIX.

'GIVE UNTO THE LORD THE GLORY DUE UNTO HIS NAME.'

Psalm xxix. 2.

'OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY, THAN THAT IS LAID, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST.—1 Cor. iii. 11.

THE evening came, on which the Rector of Drayford was expected ; Mary was very anxious about his coming, and he did not disappoint them. There came also the Wilmot family, Mr. Forbes, and two other clergymen, besides the Vicar of St. Mary's. Two of the Miss Hoopers and a brother, with the regular inmates, made up the party.

The uncle seemed to have determined on coming out in a new character, for, contrary to custom, instead of withdrawing to his retired situation, he occupied a prominent post, entertaining Mrs. Wilmot with a variety of subjects, and addressing her daughters and the Miss

Hoopers with great success, until a proposal was made for introducing a given topic to be discussed by the company.

Mary, who had previously spoken with her brother, handed him a paper, which he looked over and delivered to the Rector of Drayford, soliciting his assistance in elucidating the subject. The question was one of common inquiry, and settled between Mary and her brother as likely to tend to general usefulness : “ In what way may a believer best withstand temptation, who feels the sin of his own heart, and the allurements of the world, drawing him aside from what is right ? ”

The old Rector smiled as he read the inquiry, and taking up the subject warmly, removed his spectacles, and looking towards the others, said, “ This is a question upon which I feel more than common pleasure in being permitted to speak ; for at my advanced age, with my eyes dwelling on another world, and my body bending towards the tomb, I may speak without fear of presumption, and give my experience without danger of being accused of having formed a hasty judgment, “ In what way may a believer withstand temptation ? ” The wording of the inquiry seems to furnish us with an immediate

and applicable reply, and to lead us to our gracious Saviour, who has himself pointed out the means : ‘ *I am the way*, and the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.’ Now as we all know that sin is a means of separating us from God, and it is our misfortune to be assailed by it both within and without, we naturally look for some method by which to obtain pardon, and for some channel through which we may get free from sin, and approach God. There is none to be found but in Christ. Let us suppose ourselves attempting it in some other way ; let us for a moment imagine that we can get rid of sin by our own endeavours. Is there a believer in this company who has made the attempt, who will not at once acknowledge that it is vain and hopeless ? will he not confess that his best resolutions have failed, that his most strenuous exertions have been rendered abortive, that his most anxious desires have proved fruitless, that his highest aims have terminated in nothingness, that his best endeavours have fallen very short of his expectation. Will he not own that his prayers have been dead and cold when he wished them animated—that his repentance has been slight and unavailing—that his

meditation has been vain and light, and that the whole volume of self, with its capabilities, acquirements, habits, and constitution, has been found empty, trifling, useless, and worthless ! I think there is no one amidst us who will not join me in this statement, and no one at all acquainted with his own heart, who will not say, that had his salvation in any degree depended on himself, he would long ago have lost all hope. But let us lift our eyes beyond this picture, and see the Ransom and the Righteousness provided. Jesus himself, is the way, and the life, to him the tempted and helpless sinner goes, (taught by the Spirit of God) and findeth life. Having found the way, he findeth life, and having found life, holiness and happiness and peace are the consequent fruits ; he does not wait to make himself better before he goes to Christ, but approaches him as he is, weak, and sinful, and helpless, and worthless,—for such as these the Saviour receives ; he came not to call the righteous to repentance, but the sinners ; not to heal the whole, but them that are sick. Thus the believer, allured by the world, attacked by Satan, and harassed by indwelling sin, still looks to the Deliverer ; he knows that he has no power to escape the snare, no strength to resist Satan, no fortitude

to bear up against trial, but he also knows that in Christ is his strength, his sufficiency, his courage, and waiting on him, without any expectation from self, he can thank God who giveth him the victory."

Mr. Forbes here apologized for the interruption, but begged to observe, that he trusted the remarks which had just been made were not intended to preclude personal exertions, otherwise he feared the doctrine would be liable to much mis-application.

"Personal exertion," continued the rector, "is certainly supposed, for we expect a man to ask for what he wants, and to attend upon the means, as well as to wait for the benefit to be conferred; we do not find much enjoyment of religion, much prosperity of soul, or much victory over our enemies, where the individual has not been diligent in the appointed means; but we surely look for these evidences where we think that the privileges have been carefully attended to; and so we expect to see that a man, who has been much in communion with his Lord, and diligent in searching the scriptures and in prayer, will have become more dead to the world, and more deeply interested in his Saviour's glory. We know that all our attention to appointed means, and observance of

necessary duties will not avail us one point, as to our acceptableness with God, for this we know to have been settled in Christ before we were made acquainted with our spiritual being in Him ; but in order to our enjoyment of Christ—our glorifying Him—our own happiness—our own building up in the faith, we rejoice in being permitted to draw nigh unto God, and to receive of His fulness imparted to His waiting people.”

“ You exclude works then altogether,” said Mr. Forbes, “ as an evidence of faith ? ”

“ To answer this question would involve more than our time or the nature of our meeting will admit. I would just remark, however, that I deny works altogether as a means of justification, and in so doing, I follow the opinion of the apostles and of our admirable church, which, in the Article of Justification says, ‘ We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works, or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.’ I also would mention the period of David’s awful declension as a proof, that works cannot always be received

as an evidence of faith ; nevertheless, I do think, that, generally speaking, we have a right to expect good fruits from ‘ the trees of righteousness ;’ and where we find it otherwise, we have reason to conclude, that they are leaning to self, and not abiding in the root, in which case no one can hope to bear fruit, for our Lord says, ‘ Except ye abide in me, ye cannot bear fruit ;’ yet we should be cautious in judging, and rather inclined to pity the poor wanderer than to condemn his fall.”

Mr. Henry Conroy asked the venerable rector what he would assign as the best practical means of overcoming temptation of any kind ? “ Ah ! my dear Sir, we still keep to the one blessed way—we go to our compassionate Saviour and tell him our difficulties—we lay our case before Him, confessing our own impotence, and pleading His all-sufficiency, and His gracious promises to be our strength and our refuge. None go there in vain ! but, oh, how ‘ they that wait on Him renew their strength !’ How they experience the reality of His assurances ! how they rejoice in His consolations ! and how they live upon His fulness ! And then what a treacherous, corrupt, empty thing does one’s own heart appear ! How is it dreaded and distrusted ! How is Satan detected, and how are his weapons

foiled ! How is the world read and estimated, and its ensnaring delusions rejected ! Possessing Christ, in the full assurance of faith, we possess all things ; we have a glass through which we see the intrinsic value of all below, all that is artificial, all that is fleeting, all that is delusive, all that blinds or bewilders, all that attracts and ensnares is spread before us in its native nothingness ; and the soul, strongly led to Christ, from the time that its eye is enlightened to gaze on all created vanity, and to see it in its real colours, turns from it with disgust, and exclaims, ‘ Thou art my God, and my portion for ever ! ’

“ How then,” inquired the former, “ do you account for the inexcusable conduct of some who make a very high profession of religion ? for if they possess a principle which elevates them above the world and themselves, and enables them to see every thing in its true colours, why does not this extraordinary degree of spiritual light preserve them from being led astray ? ”

“ We must take this question in two ways, and suppose two individuals, represented as making what is termed a high profession ; the first we will describe as a believer, one who has had his heart renewed by the Spirit of grace,

and has been taught to go to Christ for salvation as a poor empty sinner, destitute of all qualities which might recommend him to God. The principle which you suppose him to possess, is the operation of the Spirit, and perfect in its nature and quality, though not in its degree ; this principle we will suppose may not have been cultivated, consequently the individual becomes influenced by a contrary principle, and the ' old man,' being left to his workings, or only partially restrained, the believer follows the natural bias of his corrupt nature, and falls before temptation. This is a melancholy truth, most humbling to poor proud human beings, and most illustrative of the passage already quoted, that, ' Except we abide in the vine we cannot bear fruit.' David, in numbering the people, is an instance of the truth of this statement ; he was looking to his own resources and to his own power to subdue his enemies, instead of going straight to the Almighty Deliverer, and depending on Him to conquer for him ; hence the Lord permitted him to act from the suggestions of his own heart, and Satan was allowed to lead him into sin. Hezekiah also has shown us what will be our conduct if left to our own imaginations, for it is said, that ' God left him, to try him, that he might

know all that was in his heart,' and truly the sight was far from a satisfactory one! We have again some insight into the secret causes which influence and operate unknown to us;—Abimelech was prevented from doing what was evil, and when he pleads his integrity the Lord says, 'I know that thou did'st this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also *withheld thee* from *sinning* against me.' And we find continual mention of the Lord's restraining individuals from following the bent of their own inclination. It is very painful to see the renewed and ransomed children of God wandering away from their only place of security, and following the desires of a depraved heart. 'In the Lord,' it is said, 'we have righteousness and strength,' therefore, whoever neglects to look to this refuge can expect nothing better than a ready preparation for sin. If any one presented me with a shield to resist the spear of an enemy, and I chose to fling it aside, would it be said that I was hardly dealt by in being exposed to the attack? I think not. However, to return to the other individual we have supposed, namely, one who makes a profession of religion, but openly scandalises it, yet not as Hezekiah, and Moses, and David, for they were graciously favoured by the word of the Lord being sent

to force conviction on their hearts, and they mourned their backsliding and returned; but this professor continues his evil course, taking up a religious phraseology to cover his iniquity;—this man cannot be termed a believer, unless, indeed, we rank Satan and his crew under that appellation, for they are said to ‘believe and *tremble* ;’ but a child of God *believes* and *loves*, a vast difference, both in the acceptance, and in the effects produced.

“Do not you think,” said Mr. Forbes, “that the preaching of high doctrines, I mean Calvinistic doctrines, is apt to give rise to professors of that description?”

“I think that no other preaching is calculated to produce genuine influential piety; and this our Reformers experimentally knew, as our Articles and beautiful Service prove. I think all other preaching decidedly wrong, unscriptural, partial instead of comprehensive, and highly prejudicial to the increase of real piety. I may be pardoned for speaking so strongly; for age, and some experience of the ill effects of such preaching, entitle me to state my opinions without reserve. As to sound divinity being sometimes held by false disciples, we have been taught to expect it should be so, as in the case of our blessed Saviour, who, amidst his

little band, suffered the traitor Judas to complete the twelve. There is more teaching in sound divinity, more doctrinal information, more endeavouring to enlighten the understanding by clearing away erroneous notions : the preacher makes it his business to inform the mind, as well as to address the feelings : hence his hearers have a better knowledge of the truths of the gospel, and a more extended view of the plan of salvation ; and we may imagine that a stony-ground hearer, receiving the word clearly into his head, and being capable of forming a good judgment, may readily take up a true profession of faith, and, adopting a correct creed, ‘ believe and tremble,’—but he does not love. Here is the grand distinguishing feature ;—the Father’s child is all gratitude, affection, and devotion—but the spurious pretender has none of this : he knows not what it means : he can talk of the scriptures—of the scheme of redemption—of the attributes of God ; but of spiritual, heart-piety, he knows nothing ;—nothing of the Spirit’s holy influence—nothing of the Father’s loving-kindness—nothing of the Saviour’s infinite fulness ; he has no earnest desires after increased devotedness of heart—no longings after further manifestations of His favour—no anxiety about conformity to His will. Let him make a pro-

fession, display his knowledge, and retain unmolested his evil propensities, and he is content. So, probably, was Judas, before his fatal crime ; and so have ever been, and ever will be, all who draw nigh unto God with their lips, while their heart is far from him. But what then ? do the hypocrite's false pretensions make the faith of God's elect of none effect ? Surely not : nor do they in any degree serve to establish the idea, that, because men may, by hearing the whole truth, arrive at the *same conclusions* and the same reach of intellect with the *fallen spirits*, therefore that truth should not be preached. If it were so, the volume of scripture might be closed. But we are every where taught to expect these consequences ; and where is the class of hearers, of whatever denomination, that does not contain such characters ? If it be objected, as I have sometimes heard, that the preaching of sound doctrine, (or, as it is called by the unreflecting, Calvinistic doctrine,) tends more particularly to the production of this description of persons, I can only say, that a legal gospel, made up of Christ as the foundation, and man's works to complete the edifice, will produce an equal portion, if not a preponderance, of false worshippers. The one style of preaching may be followed by the hypocritical professor, cor-

rect in his creed, but unchanged in his heart :— while the other is preferred by the Pharisee, who upon an unscriptural faith, builds a fancied righteousness of his own working out, —while both are equally far from the kingdom of heaven, and equally the objects of the just condemnation of Christ. Perhaps the hypocrite is the less to be deprecated of the two ; he carries the mark of his master's superscription darkly engraven on his forehead, and is ' read and known of all men ;' the other, bearing an external garb of conformity to the views and opinions of the religious world, goes in and out in security, blinding others with his pride and ignorance, laying on them heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and making them, as our Lord says, ' ten-fold more the child of hell ' than ' himself. ' ”

“ You do not think, then,” asked one of the gentlemen present, “ that the higher doctrines tend more towards immorality of conduct than another style of preaching ? ”

“ I certainly do not. I think, as I have said before, that, from the opportunity which those possess, who have the doctrines fully and clearly laid before them, of obtaining information, they may with greater facility set up for teachers, and at an easy rate make high pretensions to religious

knowledge, by which they draw upon themselves the observation of others, and, naturally enough, excite an expectation to see them regulate their conduct in accordance with their doctrines. And when it is discovered that this is not the case, an instant cry is raised ; not so much against the individual himself, as against the doctrines. They forget that our Lord foretold that many should prophesy in His name, and in His name cast out devils ; yet would He say unto them, ‘ Depart from me, I never knew you : ’ and that, in the Parable of the Tares, we are told that the weeds should grow till the harvest, and then would the Lord separate the two, casting the weeds aside for the furnace. St. Peter also says, that in his day there were unlearned and *unstable professors*, who did wrest his beloved brother Paul’s epistles, as they did also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Why therefore, when we find that the ministry of our Lord and his Apostles produced these effects, and that we have been warned to expect them, should we open our eyes in astonishment when such things come before us, as if we had never been taught to consider them a natural consequence. We may not hear the same loud outcry where a refined, smooth gospel is preached, because it is more easy, in this case, to conform

to external requirements, and because also the natural enmity is not excited in any thing like the same degree in which it is by an unreserved scriptural declaration of the *whole* truth : and therefore the Pharisee and the poor blind, self-deceived creature escapes with little observation, or with little condemnation. They charitably hope well of all who conform to certain duties, and practise certain mortifications ; but the moment a Judas is discovered among the twelve, every eye is upon him, to detect and magnify his faults, every ear is open to hear his crimes, every voice raised to censure the evil consequences of giving countenance to such *dangerous* doctrines. I cannot say I regret that it is so, for I think public observation has a good effect ; but I cannot help smiling at the sort of pleasure that seems produced by the discovery ; and I sometimes wonder that persons acquainted with their Bibles should not have perceived that what is to them a subject of triumph and surprise, is rather an evidence of faithful and sound preaching, and should incline them to inquire more conscientiously into the nature of those doctrines which seem to give rise to feelings and consequences foretold in Holy Writ as *infallible tests* of a *sound Gospel*. But, alas ! the heart of man will not accept truth, until all the

‘refuges of lies’ have been swept away : and we may preach God’s pure word to eternity, without any impression, unless the Holy Spirit stamp it on our hearts : ‘ Though one rose from the dead,’ says our Saviour, ‘ yet will they not believe.’ Yet the sheep hear His voice, and follow Him : they know not the voice of strangers, but at His call they attend, and are led in and out, and find pasture. What a gracious provision do these words imply :—they not only are guided and led by Him, but they find pasture ; they are watered by His comforting Spirit, and fed by his beneficent hand ! Can any one complain of the roughness of the way, when He goes with them—when He condescends to manifest Himself unto them—when He promises to direct their steps, to preserve them to the end, and to present them ‘ holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable,’ before God : nothing to distress them, that He does not allow, —nothing to tempt them, that He does not permit,—no enemy to overcome, that He will not subdue,—no trial to befall, that He does not see needful,—no accident to occur, that He does not foresee,—no fall to overtake them, but He will raise them up again,—no power to be sufficient to pluck them from His hand,—no sin nor sorrow to reach them, when He places

them at His own right-hand in His heavenly kingdom? These are assurances, blessed scriptural assurances, that elevate the poor sinful believer above himself and his corruptions—above Satan and his deceptions—above the world and its allurements: he knows that all is safe in his Redeemer's hands, and that all things shall work together for his good—and knowing this he possesses that peace which passeth all understanding, and which none but a child of God, in the simplicity of faith, can possess."

"Do you think," replied Mr. Forbes, "that a believer is at all times, or has a right at all times, to be assured of his personal interest in Christ, and of his final preservation?"

"There is not the shadow of a doubt that he *ought* at all times to be assured of his election before God; but through the unbelief of our hearts, and the suggestions of Satan, doubts and anxieties will obtrude themselves on the minds of young converts, but this arises from their not having clear views of the nature of the covenant, and from a habit of looking to self for something to render them more fit, as they think, to go to Christ. But when they understand the ground of their acceptance, they become free from these legal and unbelieving fears, and take the comfort

of their knowledge, bringing forth the consequent fruit,—as illustrated by St. Paul, who addresses the faithful and zealous Thessalonians as ‘knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.’ If an individual spiritually believes in Christ, this is a certain proof of his interest in him, for ‘no man can come unto Christ except the Father draw him;’—and if he has an interest in Christ, we call him a believer; and if he believes, we have our Lord’s own words that ‘whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life;’ it therefore follows either that these words mean nothing, or that the believer has eternal life secured to him, and that he shall never fall away, nor shall any one pluck him out of our Lord’s hands. Therefore I conceive it to be the height of unbelief, and consequently, the worst sin that a renewed sinner can commit, to imagine that his safety in any degree depends upon himself, or that he is at one moment more entitled to lay claim to salvation than at another. This latter notion is a most self-righteous and abominable supposition, impeaching the glory of Christ, and holding up the worthless efforts of man as available towards procuring the redemption of his soul. From these and other ideas, alike unscriptural and monstrous, arise all those evils which destroy the purity of the

here will dispute that Abraham, Jacob, David, Job, together with a long list of scripture examples, the Prophets, Evangelists, and the Apostles, knew their election of God, and confidently anticipated an inheritance in glory; now, should we be led, from examining their lives, to consider that the views they held tended to immorality, or that their belief in the assurances God lessened their devotion to him, or weakened their solicitude after conformity to his will? Surely not! Look at the glorious life of believing worthies recorded in the seventh of Hebrews, who all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having believed them afar off and were persuaded of them. What effects did the persuasion of their claim to eternal life through Christ Jesus, seen afar off, produce on their actions? See Noah, relying upon the strength of God's assurances, preparing his ark amidst the wonder and ridicule of a thoughtless world, who, while feasting and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, neither understood nor cared for the faith which influenced the elect patriarch. Look at the father of the faithful, the believing Abraham, called upon to quit his home, and to go forth, not knowing whither he was journeying in a strange land, and re-

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gospel, and lead to such deadness, unbelief, unfaithfulness, hardness of heart, depression, sorrow and misery. The misled believer fancies that he may hope he is safe when he can enjoy religion, when he can pray with fervour and read with comfort; but the moment these sensible demonstrations fail, and he finds himself tried by desertions and temptations and sin, instead of going to Scripture and learning that this was the case with all God's children, he concludes that if he is not already an outcast he is on the verge of it, ready to be finally rejected upon another failure,—he loses all his confidence and peace—and naturally enough grows depressed, hopeless, and miserable; and if his trial continues long, we usually find him ending by spiritual coldness and unhappiness. This was not the case with believers in the Apostle's time: and why? not because they had a different principle bestowed, but because that principle was clearly and faithfully stated, the Holy Ghost accompanying the word with power: but now sinners will not go to the word 'as new born babes, desiring the sincere milk of it,' they add water to its purity, by reading the inventions of man, and thus their souls are not nourished: they hear that when they have performed certain duties, and endeavoured with their best ability to serve God,

they may then hope they have an interest in the atonement, they must wait (as I once heard an excellent and eminent brother tell his congregation,) for a little more humility before they can go to Christ and take him as their Saviour—they must acquire a little more self-denial—a little more conquest over temper—a little more victory over sin—a little more charity—a little more faith—a little more holiness—a little more love, and *then* they might go to Christ. But what madness is there in the idea—what ignorance of self—and what pride and presumption, to imagine that all these little acquirements, made up into a whole, would render the sinner more fitting to be a recipient of the grace of God, which we are told is a gift, not a *purchase*, and ‘not of works, lest any man should boast.’

“I quite agree with you in all you say about faith being the gift of God,” said Mr. Forbes, but still I must think that such very great confidence about our election and final perseverance is somewhat dangerous.”

“I will take the liberty of asking you one question: Have you ever made the trial?”

Mr. Forbes hesitated as if half ashamed to say he had not, and yet unable to confess that he had;—his aged friend quickly saw what was passing in his mind, and continued, “I think no one

here will dispute that Abraham, Jacob, David, Job, together with a long list of scripture examples, the Prophets, Evangelists, and the Apostles, knew their election of God, and confidently anticipated an inheritance in glory ; now, should we be led, from examining their lives, to consider that the views they held tended to immorality, or that their belief in the assurances of God lessened their devotion to him, or slackened their solicitude after conformity to his will ? Surely not ! Look at the glorious list of believing worthies recorded in the eleventh of Hebrews, who all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them. What effects did the persuasion of their claim to eternal life through Christ Jesus, seen afar off, produce on their actions ? See Noah, acting upon the strength of God's assurances, preparing his ark amidst the wonder and ridicule of a thoughtless world, who, while eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, neither understood nor cared for the faith which influenced the elect patriarch. Look at the father of the faithful, the believing Abraham, called upon to quit his home, and to go forth, not knowing whither he went, sojourning in a strange land, and required to

give the severest evidence that the heart of the believer could yield. See, again, Moses under the influence of faith, assured of his election, and esteeming it a joy to suffer affliction for his Master's glory, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin in a palace. Take Jacob, Joseph, and the other faithful believers, and we shall see how faith wrought in them to the arming them with strength for every trial. And should faith change its operation in our days and prove a means of producing evil consequences? Do we not read that it is the gift of God; must it not therefore be pure and holy in its nature, and may we not hence conclude that the greater our faith, the greater our desires after holiness? In our intercourse with mankind, do we not expect that where we confer some very important benefit on a friend, we excite in his mind a feeling of gratitude? Where there is any generosity or worth in a character, does not the heaping of favors on the individual produce a correspondent feeling of gratitude? and do we not usually see that opportunities are eagerly sought for, of extolling the benevolence of the benefactor, and means gladly embraced of testifying a sense of the obligation? the man would be considered less than human whose ingratitude increased with his benefits, and who

confident of receiving bounty, insulted his benefactor's name! No! rather, being 'sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,' and having 'the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,' it becomes our anxious desire to glorify God in our day of visitation, remembering with gratitude unspeakable, that it was 'the Father's good pleasure to *give*' us 'the kingdom,' and that having received so great and precious a gift, it becomes us as grateful servants to seek all opportunities of telling of His salvation, and magnifying and extolling His glorious name. We feel that the promise acts as it did with Joshua, to whom the Lord said, when he looked in terror upon his enemies, 'Fear not, for I have given them into thy hands,' so we, knowing that our enemies are many and powerful, and ready to destroy both soul and body, may joyfully look to him as our deliverer, assured of his conquering for us; exclaiming with the Psalmist, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!' How stupendous does the ransom then appear! how great the gift! how joyous the glad tidings! The soul knows not how to testify its gratitude, and feels with David, 'Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?' Is there no way that

I can show my love to my blessed Saviour? Be assured that if gratitude and love, the strongest of earthly feelings, will not excite to virtue and holiness, it is hopeless to try any other motives! Slavish fear may produce a spurious imitation of these graces, and mortification of the body may effect a change of habits, but gratitude and praise, the most acceptable offerings to heaven, will never flow spontaneously but from a heart set free from fear, and a bosom eased of its anxieties and filled with happiness and peace. It often grieves my heart to see how God's children are burdened and kept in bondage and legal fears all their lives, owing to their not simply receiving the doctrines of grace, as they are set forth in Scripture. They seem to think knowledge of little importance, whereas it appears, when accompanied by the Spirit's influence, the very support, humanly speaking, of our faith, and the means of our spiritual growth. They set doctrines aside, after receiving a faint measure of light as to the way of salvation, and fix their eyes without removal upon the exhortations and precepts, not considering that they invert the order of things, who build the upper stories of a house without first laying a firm foundation. The doctrines of grace, or the terms

upon which we receive redemption, with the means of strengthening our belief, are the ground-work and foundation, the pillars on which the structure rests. But the precepts are the ornaments which are added, upon the building being "fitly framed and compacted." When this is effected we look for the ornamental work, but not before. Yet blind man expects to see the fruits before the tree is grafted upon the parent stem; and he thinks to show the vigour and health of a strong constitution (although he knows that he has a wasting disorder) without inquiring into the means of recovery, or going to the physician who could at once heal him. Alas, alas! what animal is so blind as man, or so dead to his own interests!"

"You would leave the preceptive parts of the Bible out of sight, then," said Mr. Forbes, "and only preach the doctrines."

"I would desire to follow the direction laid down by the Holy Ghost, and to 'preach Christ,' fully persuaded that when once a poor sinner was brought spiritually to understand the covenant of grace, and led to 'abide in the vine,' he would immediately on that union bring forth fruit. But I should consider it equally absurd to stand beside some corpse and bid it rise to life, as to tell the soul to bear fruit when it was not

grafted into the vine. It is making Scripture a fable, to invent such unreasonable notions, and to suppose that they are warranted from its pages. Let any one doubting on this point take up the Bible with an unprejudiced mind, and with a determination to examine it impartially : I think that man will not be long in arriving at the conviction, that the doctrines of calling and election are first positively stated and asserted, and upon this foundation follow the precepts as the consequent effects of the believer's having become a member of the mystical body. Hence we see the Apostles addressing 'the faithful in Christ Jesus,' 'the called of the Father,' 'the elect brethren,' 'the chosen people.' They rejoice in their fellowship with Christ, and dwell on the glorious nature of the scheme of redemption, and then beseech them that they would 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. St. Paul, when writing to the Philippians, addresses them as those 'whose names *are* in the book of life,' and *therefore* exhorts them to 'rejoice in the Lord alway,' and to 'let their moderation be known unto all men ;' again, writing to the Collossians he tells them that their 'life is hid with Christ in God,' and 'when Christ, who is their life shall appear, then shall they also appear with Him in glory ;' and proceeds,

‘mortify *therefore* your members which are upon the earth,’ and ‘lie not one to another, *seeing* ye have put off the old man with his deeds,’ but ‘put on, *as the elect* of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and forgive one another as Christ forgave you.’ Timothy is exhorted not to be ashamed of the gospel, nor of its followers ; for God by that gospel ‘hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.’ Again, believers are called ‘children of light and of the day ;’ ‘*therefore* let us not sleep as do others,’ ‘for God hath not appointed *us* to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.’ ‘Be ye holy,’ and ‘pass the time of your sojourning here in fear : *forasmuch as ye know* that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ.’ And Peter writing of the new heavens and new earth, adds, ‘wherefore, beloved, *seeing that ye look* for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.’ It is, indeed, beyond question, that throughout the Scriptures the precepts follow as the consequent effects of a

living faith, they are not supposed to proceed from any other cause ; and therefore we find that believers are urged to bring forth fruits worthy of 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; called out of darkness into marvellous light.' But persons are not exhorted to bring forth the fruits of faith *as a condition* of their being chosen into the family of heaven ; nor do we find that the precepts to obedience precede the promises ; on the contrary they invariably follow ; therefore the teachers of the everlasting gospel are bound to act upon the precedent of the Scriptures, preaching Christ, and informing their hearers upon the doctrines of grace, and following up their instruction by exhortations to them to *shew* their calling and election by the purity of their lives. Some would have us invert the plan of Scripture, and tell the people who are unacquainted with Christ as the way of salvation, to set about reforming their lives, that thus they might place themselves in a condition to be accepted of God through Christ the universal Saviour ; but, my dear friends, we know that this is all wrong, and all quite unscriptural, and we cannot expect active lively Christians, where they have only husks to feed upon.'

Mr. H. Conroy asked the Rector if he was

of opinion that those ministers of the gospel who did not preach what he would consider very sound doctrines, were not likely to do any good.

“My dear Sir, I hope no one present will consider me so uncharitable—who am I that I should judge another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. I should however conceive that I am justified in concluding him weak in the faith, and consequently incapable of building up others; nevertheless we do see that God graciously shows his favour to the weak, and often permits them to be the happy instruments of leading sinners to the Saviour. Such individuals may be compared to the law, which is termed “the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ,” and a strong rod they exercise! nevertheless God who can command stones to become bread, turns man’s weakness into strength; and desires those “who are strong, to bear the infirmities of the weak.” I would, however, by no means advise any one who is anxious to grow in the knowledge of Christ, to attend such preaching; milk is for babes; but we should not expect a grown man to grow very vigorous upon it. I may take this opportunity of saying a few words on a subject which has for many years been strongly impressed on my

mind, but which I have at times felt restrained from mentioning, because I would not incur the imputation of censuring my brethren in the ministry. I am, however, so convinced of the culpable negligence of many of us, and of our inexcusable ignorance of human nature, that I cannot suffer this opportunity to pass without expressing my sentiments. There appears to me, such a total disregard of scripture declarations on this point, and such an absence of inquiry into their own hearts, and into the condition of man, that I cannot help considering their ignorance and want of information as highly to be condemned. I imagine that blindness on this subject in a minister is by no means to be palliated. Mere philosophers, by the aid of reason and observation, arrive at a degree of accuracy on this head which should put to shame the ignorance of the preachers of the gospel. I have heard many of the latter put forth assertions on the subject of good works, which have perfectly astonished me, and to which I am sure I could discover no correspondent feeling in my own mind. I have heard them talk of the simplicity of motive, and the unmixed principle of integrity which occasionally actuated; but I do confess I never could find it so in my own case. I remember when I

was a very young man, to have had my mind disturbed and distressed by observations of this kind. I heard others talk of ascending the pulpit "with the sole desire of glorifying God," without any mixture of other motives. Now, I am quite persuaded, that had I never committed any one sin, but that of the bare act of preaching, I should utterly despair of pardon, from the mixture of unholy and self-righteous feelings that I discover; and I feel that what appears to others, perhaps, the most pure of all exercises, is so thoroughly worthless, and so compounded of impious motives, that that very act would require an atonement of itself, apart from all other sin. I used to imagine, before I knew more of the volume of truth and had more comprehensive views of the entire state of human depravity, than those who talked about "the merit of some good works," and the "pure charitable feelings," and "simple pure intentions" of others, that I certainly must be compounded of very different materials; that my heart, assuredly, was not of the same construction. I heard them speak of having but one desire influencing them—that of glorifying God; and of being actuated by one principle—that of delighting in Him and despising the allurements of the

world. I could not find it so with me. I found that the more I examined, the less I could assent to their feelings. I could not discover that my wish extended beyond the desire *to desire* to glorify God; nor could I confess that I had learnt to despise the allurements of the world; it was the sincere and strong desire of my newly infused principle to do so, but I still saw the old rebel nature warring against the new, and looking after the pomp and pride of life, spite of the conviction that was clearly impressed in my mind of their vanity and paltry parade. But when I heard other christians, older, and, as I imagined, more experienced in the divine life, speak more favourably of their state, I became exceedingly distressed in my mind, and apprehensive, that as my heart manifested no tokens of simplicity of intention, or faithfulness of purpose, the Saviour who granted his pardon to them, could hardly be expected to extend it to me, and it was not until I was led to search diligently into the Scriptures, and to see what is there said of the heart of every man upon the earth, that I understood something of the full meaning of those words, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good which are accustomed to do evil." I do not know how my friends pre-

sent may feel, but I must confess that my reason cannot take in the meaning of good works as applicable to myself. If I put my hand in my pocket, and give something in charity, as it is called, I cannot say that the motive is ever entirely a pure one. I may give, perhaps, because I feel it a duty,—because I wish to be thought liberal,—because I want to get rid of the petition,—or perhaps, because the distress touches my heart, by reminding me how I should feel in a similar situation; but I never can truly say that I give from the pure love of God, apart from all human considerations: nor can I pretend that in passing an opinion on others, or hearing one of myself, I find any thing of the pure and charitable and good feelings that others talk of possessing. On the contrary, I am often completely mortified and ashamed when I detect the mean and contemptible and worthless motives that mix with all I do and feel: and I am perfectly astonished how other christians can wilfully shut their eyes on truths, which, while they must be most humiliating to the pride of man, are yet so clearly laid down, and so necessary to their knowledge of themselves, and their just appreciation of a Saviour who willingly made an atonement for such a race. From this benighted ignorance

of our own corrupt hearts arise many of those evils which interfere with the peace, and injure the walk of the christian. Certainly, the all-wise disposer of events, had He seen fit so to do, could easily have infused a nature into his believing children, powerful enough to have subdued and effectually destroyed the natural corruption of man, but He, for purposes of wisdom, suffered the two to grow together, like the wheat and the tares, till the harvest. We are, perhaps, permitted to be acted upon and tried by these sins and infirmities that our dependance on the Saviour may be more entire and our reliance on Him more full; for it is not possible for those who know little of the plague of their own hearts, to appreciate the value of the ransom that was paid for them, as they do who feel the hourly and momentary pressure of worthlessness and pollution—"to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." But a sense of heavy guilt brings a correspondent sense of mercy, and they who see what is in their own hearts, can more readily make allowances for others, and exhibit something more of that beautiful feeling which inclines us to sympathise in each other's trials, and to deal gently with a fallen brother, "considering our ourselves, lest we

also be tempted." Nothing appears to my mind so grossly ridiculous, (if I may so speak,) as the imposition one frail and corrupt worm tries to practise on another ! We are so blind—so dull—so ignorant of our real nature, that there is no artifice we will not rather have recourse to, than see ourselves as we are, or suffer others so to imagine us ;—we are perfect hypocrites on this subject ! even those who have studied the matter, and feel the weight of indwelling pollution, are affected by it ; and those who know little of themselves are lamentably under its influence. It is absurd to see the contrivances they will resort to, in order to appear to others, what they wish to think themselves ;—what assumed solemnity of deportment,—what attempts to make others fancy them entirely dead to the world,—what protestations of indifference to the things that draw others aside, while in many instances (where the Saviour's glories have not been revealed,) the temptations that ensnare the world's votaries, beset their hearts most urgently, loudly as they disclaim all interest in its vanities. Alas ! what mockery is all this ! what vain foolish notions do we fall into ! Why not practise a little sincerity, and seem what we are, using all means to grow in grace, but still not making

pretences to what we do not possess. If we would all deal a little more honestly with ourselves and others, how much pleasanter and better would it be, and how much more reason should we have to expect to extend the influence of religion. But to return to the subject of legal preaching, from which we digressed, I think that we require most essentially to have our faith increased, and to know how to live upon the fulness of Christ; a life of faith is the only life worth living, and the only one which ensures happiness."

Mr. Forbes again apologized for repeating his former opinions, but he still could not be convinced that it was prudent or wise to preach such doctrines as his friend, the Rector of Drayford, advocated, because he must think they would lead to mischievous consequences.

"I can only repeat what I have stated before," replied the rector, smiling good-humouredly, "that we have no other precedent in Scripture, nor among the Reformers, than the one to which I find you objecting. I think if you would examine the Word of God, with the simple intention of learning what is truth and what is not, you would soon embrace similar views, without holding back upon the score of wisdom or prudence; objections which fall at once

before the words of our Lord : ' I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the *wise* and *prudent*, and hast revealed them unto babes.' "

" I might," replied Mr. Forbes, " no doubt, very soon give up my old opinions and adopt others, provided I could alter my judgment, but I might still be in error."

" If you merely changed your opinions, certainly you might; but let me be understood, when speaking of a change of views, to imply a spiritual conviction, produced by the Holy Spirit's operation on the *heart*, which I conceive any humble, diligent seeker may reckon upon obtaining. I do not imagine that taking up one set of opinions, and laying down another, as one would upon an indifferent matter, has anything to do with the question we are discussing. I know it is as impossible for you, or any one, to change your sentiments, without the agency of the Spirit, as it is to command the sea into a calm; or, to use the expression of our Lord, as it would be to 'deceive the very elect.' Because 'it is *given*' to some 'to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but 'to others it is not given;' a proof that it is not an acquirement of the intellect, but a gift from heaven. Jesus ~~said~~, 'a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from

heaven.' But to return to the other point, which Scripture alone must answer, what do we find on the subject of the sanctification of the elect of God ! In the sixteenth of Acts they are said to be ' sanctified by faith.' Our Lord says to his disciples, ' Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and *ordained* you that ye should go and bring *forth fruit*.' Again : ' In me is thy fruit found.' ' He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love,' and we are called ' His workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God had before *ordained* that we should walk in them.' Christ is said to have given himself for the church, ' that he might sanctify and cleanse it,' and make it a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish.' And ' the beloved of the Lord ' are called upon to give thanks, ' because God hath from the beginning *chosen* ' them ' to salvation *through sanctification* of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.' It is this very truth that sanctifies, these very doctrines so much disliked, that produce godliness. Christ is said to have given himself for us, ' that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people,

zealous of good works.' Mark this passage! not zealous, as is often apprehended, of pursuing an evil course, but 'zealous of good works!' 'For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel.' 'I will *put my laws* into their mind, and write them *in their hearts*, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.' Again we find in the general epistle of Peter, that Apostle addressing the 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' And Jude writes 'to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus and called.' In Jeremiah we find this strong passage: 'before thou camest out of the womb *I sanctified thee.*' Did the time permit we might find many more similar passages convincing us, that 'as many as touched' Jesus 'were made perfectly whole,' but it happens to our unbelieving hearts as it did to those of 'His own country,' 'He did not many works there *because of their unbelief.*' In conclusion, I shall only refer you to the words of the late Mr. Legh Richmond on this subject. Mr. R's. mother, like many other pious, but not fully enlightened persons, was apt to think of her sanctifica-

tion as of something necessary to be done, in order to render her acceptable to God. He corrects this mistaken view in these words,—
“The soul that by faith, through grace, is saved without works, obtains an inward principle of love, which *must work, cannot but work, and actually does work*. The order is thus, First, God loved us ; secondly, thence we obtain faith to trust him ; thirdly, we are *thus* saved ; fourthly, we *therefore* love him who first loved us ; fifthly, this love produces good thoughts, words, and works, as the *fruits*, not the *root*, of our salvation.”¹

The rector here closed his remarks, and the guests shortly separated. Cora Wilmot found an opportunity to tell Mary how happy she had been in hearing that evening’s conversation. Mrs. Wilmot looked interested, and so did the most of the party except the vicar of St. Mary’s, who seemed weary and ill at ease.

¹ Life of Rev. L. Richmond. 1st. Edit. p. 444.

CHAPTER XX.

‘BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS.’—Rom. xii. 16.

‘COUNT HIM NOT AS AN ENEMY, BUT ADMONISH HIM AS
A BROTHER.—2 Thess. iii. 15.

‘IT IS BETTER TO HEAR THE REBUKE OF THE WISE, THAN
FOR A MAN TO HEAR THE SONG OF FOOLS.’—Eccl. vii. 5.

THE morning was very fine on which the party met to proceed on their excursion. The Vicar of St. Mary’s seemed to have recovered his spirits, and to be dividing his attentions between Miss Lucy Wilmot and one of the Miss Hoopers. Mrs. Wilmot appeared rather depressed, but soon assumed her natural lively manner; she led the way into the picture gallery, calling the attention of Mr. H. Conroy to a fine painting by Rembrandt, which she said was reputed to be one of the most valuable in the collection. The two elder daughters joined their mother in pointing out, and commenting

on its merit: "How sweetly that baby smiles in its mother's face," said one of the ladies, "and how round and fat that pretty little hand is." "What a fine countenance the mother has, and how full of expression her eyes are!" said another. "What a sweet painter Rembrandt is! how soft and beautiful his figures are! I wonder, mamma, if Lord B—— would allow me to make a copy of this picture?" "I should think he might, my dear, we can ask if he ever allows his pictures to be copied, I should like you to copy this Rembrandt, and I think you could make a very pretty little drawing"—"for my study," added the Vicar of St. Mary's, concluding Mrs. Wilmot's sentence; they all laughed and continued their criticisms. "Nothing can be more beautiful than the effect of that light upon the woman's apron: Rembrandt manages his lights so well, one can always know his pictures, there is no mistaking them."—"Unless for the copies," said Mary's uncle, who had stood behind the ladies, listening to their remarks, and had ascertained that the picture upon which they were lavishing their praises, was in fact a copy of the original which the owner had ordered to be hung up while the other was undergoing some repairs. The ladies looked rather annoyed, but quickly

renewed their observations upon another admired painting by Salvator Rosa. Mary was looking at it with Cora Wilmot, and asking her opinion, but the latter said she really knew so little of the art, that it would be presumption in her to pretend to give one. She thought it was a striking composition, and pleased her very much, but further she knew nothing. It certainly was, as Cora expressed it,—a striking picture, and the Rector of Drayford appeared greatly pleased with it; he and Mr. H. Conroy discussed its merits together, for both understood them. It was one of nature's wildest scenes, which the painter had chosen to display the spirit and characteristic singularity of his irregular and wild genius. The composition, the trees, the figures, to the most minute detail, were all marked with the same rude, yet dignified harmony, and the mind fond of savage and uncultivated nature, would dwell on such a representation with feelings of grandeur and awe. "How spirited and bold that tree looks!" said Miss Wilmot. "Yes, it is a very fine picture," replied her sister, "but the scene is too wild, I think. I like also more softness of finish, and more smoothness;" and she proceeded to comment upon the head of a Magdalene, by Guido, which was indeed a very excellent

picture, and painted as Guido's best works are, with all that clearness and purity of colouring which render his females so lovely: the hands were folded across the bosom, and the head raised in a posture of supplication; a clear soft light was thrown on the upper part, which gave a depth and transparency to the full uplifted eye; the blue drapery which covered the head and shoulders assisted in giving relief, and the whole formed a very interesting picture.

"Look, mamma," said the young lady, "at this Magdalene, how exquisite it is! what fine eyes she has! oh! how I envy her those eyes."—"Better envy her silence," whispered Mary's uncle.—"How sweetly that blue drapery is painted, and how gracefully it falls over those white hands of hers! but, mamma, don't you think that that arm is badly proportioned?" "It is foreshortened," said the uncle. "Well, but still I think it looks unnatural;—oh! here is another sweet picture," said the young lady, examining a copy from Claude, "one always knows a Claude." "It is not so very easy however," said the uncle, "to distinguish between an original *Claude*, and a copy; I think it requires rather a critical eye to decide; I have seen some copies so successfully executed,

that I could not at once distinguish between them ; one should have an acquaintance with pictures to know accurately at all times, I imagine"—“ Well then, am I right, is not this an original ? ”—“ I should say not ; but we will ask the person who shows them.” It was soon ascertained that the admired landscape was a copy. There were not many fine pictures in the room, besides one or two of Raffaele’s inferior works, some good ones by Poussin, and a few of the Dutch school. As soon as the party had gone over them all, they retired to the Park, and selecting a pleasant spot for resting themselves, they agreed that it would be best to dine there, as notwithstanding the advanced period of the season, the day was extremely warm.

Mr. Forbes, who was a man of cultivated taste, entered upon the subject of painting, during the rural repast : all seemed interested, except the vicar of St. Mary’s, who was much too busy, attending on the ladies, and eating his own dinner, to pay attention to any thing else. When those claims were satisfied, he proposed a walk through the grounds, and the rest willingly entering into his plan, the whole party moved off in different directions, arranging to meet at a place of rendezvous, agreed upon. The rector of Drayford offered his arm to Mary,

which she most gladly accepted ; Cora Wilmot looked as if she wished to join them, and Mary was on the point of asking her, when Mr. Forbes desired to be her conductor to the Aviary, which Mrs. Wilmot was engaging Mr. Henry Conroy to go and see. She left her eldest daughter to his care, and taking the arm of Mary's uncle, walked off very well satisfied ; the vicar of St. Mary's followed with Miss Hooper and Miss Lucy Wilmot. Mary walked slowly with her aged friend, and heard him speak of the glories of another world, with an animation and enthusiasm, that made his voice and manner appear like that of a young man, rather than of a person of his years ; his conversation was very delightful, and very encouraging ; he told her much of the latter period of his own life, pointed out to her many of the trials and temptations that would await her, and endeavoured, from his own experience, to show her the means of overcoming them. All his discourse led one way ; he appeared to have concentrated all the scattered thoughts of an active and intelligent mind, and to have bent them to one focus : the beautiful simile of a late gifted poet, applied to an unworthy object, suggested itself to the mind of Mary, and Christ seemed ' the ocean to the rivers of his thoughts.' So completely

did the creature sink into nothingness in his hands, that he almost appeared to have forgotten its existence in the contemplation of the Redeemer. There seemed scarcely a link dividing him from another world, so intense and fixed was his interest, and so graciously had the Saviour manifested Himself to His aged servant.

“There are two principles,” he added, addressing Mary, as they approached within reach of their friends, “which I have wished to bear in mind, and, as an old man, would strongly urge upon my young friends. The first is to keep the eye stedfastly fixed on Christ, as the only sure means of going safely through life;—the second is to suspend our judgment upon each other, remembering the command of our Lord, that ‘we should love each other with a pure heart, fervently.’ We are too apt to forget that we are children of the same Father, and too ready to decide upon the actions of others. My dear young friend, hear an old man’s advice, and lean to the side of tenderness and charity; we are all frail beings, and it ill becomes us to judge each other; let us go to the throne of grace for those whom we cannot reform, but let us refrain from condemnation.”

The conversation was here interrupted by the sound of merriment, and a voice was heard singing in a most animated and ludicrous tone. "They are very gay in that wood," said the old rector, smiling in his usual benevolent manner; and as they approached nearer, they perceived the vicar of St. Mary's seated on the branch of a great oak, singing a comic song to the others. Mr. Forbes' countenance was wavering between a smile and a reproof. Mr. H. Conroy sat with a look of perfect abstraction: the uncle's smile of satire was strongly impressed. Mrs. Wilmot and the other ladies laughed, as by an involuntary impulse. Cora Wilmot alone looked serious and annoyed.

Mary remarked to her aged friend on the impropriety of one of the Vicar's profession, thus bringing ridicule on the cause of religion. "My dear Miss Conroy, what you say is very true, but let us remember, that that gentleman knows nothing of the enjoyments of religion, and He who hath made us to differ can as easily turn his folly into praise. Yet good sense should teach him better, and others should consider his interest, and not request him to entertain them in that manner." As the kind rector finished this sentence, he advanced into the middle of the party, and looking up towards

the gay vicar, exclaimed, " Ah ! my dear brother, one might almost mistake you for a raven, so unaccustomed are we to see any thing of your cloth lodged in a tree, or sending forth such sounds." The vicar of St. Mary's laughed, but did not continue his song.

The old Rector said he required a little rest after his walk, and sitting down, requested some of the ladies to gratify him with a hymn, which he thought would sound very well among the trees, and would suit best with his years. Some of the young ladies looked embarrassed, for they had been laughing so much at the Vicar of St. Mary's specimen of the ludicrous, that they could hardly feel in tune for a hymn ; but Cora Wilmot and Mary immediately began, and were joined by Mr. Forbes and others :

" Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress :
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

When from the dust of death I rise,
To take my mansion in the skies,
Even then shall this be all my plea,—
' Jesus hath lived, hath died for me.'

Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay ?
Fully, through thee, absolved I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

Thus Abraham, the friend of God,
Thus all the armies bought with blood,
Saviour of sinners thee proclaim,
Sinners, of whom the chief I am.

This spotless robe the same appears,
When ruined nature sinks in years ;
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is ever new.

And when the dead shall hear thy voice,
Thy banished children shall rejoice ;
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, the Lord our righteousness ! ”

The words were in accordance with the present feelings of some, and it was sung with taste and judgment ; the situation lent its aid, and the harmony became very fine in the open air, as the voices swelled and died away upon the ear. When the last verse ended there was an universal silence, broken only by a sigh from one or two of the party.

“ Why should any one here sigh,” said the old Rector, perceiving whence the sounds had come, “ the children of God should be a very happy people ! think what are all our trials here, of sin, and unbelief, and sorrow, when we have the assurance that a place is prepared in heaven for us, and that the youngest among us has but a few fleeting years, and then eternity with all its glory is our own.”

There was again a pause, and Mrs. Wilmot, whose feelings seemed touched by the scene, added, "Ah, but, my dear Sir, when one feels nothing but vanity and sin drawing one aside, one cannot help sighing."

"We have indeed cause to sigh when these things press in upon the soul and bind it down to earth; but, my dear madam, we must not be discouraged, we must rise up and go at once to the Saviour, and beseech him to undertake our case for us. We shall open the door to a whole troop of enemies, if we sit contemplating our diseases and do not go immediately for a remedy;—we shall have unbelief, and worldly-mindedness, and every sort of vanity, carrying us away captive, unless we go instantly to our heavenly Friend: there is no parleying with our own hearts, or with Satan, they are too subtle and treacherous for us. We have only to recollect that Jesus is our friend and *deliverer*, and go and ask for his assistance; it is ours by promise, we have only to present his word for it and obtain it. We are told that 'the Father gives not the Spirit by measure unto him,' but pours it upon him abundantly; and what does this imply, but that Jesus, being our spiritual head, has an infinite unction to bestow on his people. He receives the holy

oil, as may be supposed, on his sacred head, from which it descends in a gracious stream upon the members of his body: thus naturally diffusing itself over them all, and anointing them with the Spirit of holiness."

"I wish I could see as you do!" exclaimed Mrs. Wilmot, "I wish I had your faith."

"Faith, my dear madam, is the gift of God, and a blessed gift it is:—it is said to 'come by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' therefore no Christian need complain of want of faith, when he has the way of obtaining it so clearly pointed out. But I am afraid that we are apt to put the Bible aside for human authors, and then no wonder if our souls are lean and lack food: it is said that 'my word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.' Now God sends his word to his own people, with a special purpose, and what shall be said of us if we neglect to study it? I think, to use the words of the prophet, that we 'forsake our own mercies,' and instead of enjoying the happiness that belongs to the believer, as his portion through redeeming love, we cast aside our blessings more like Esau than any other; and were it not that Jesus, 'having loved his people, loves them

to *the end*,' we should finally lose them altogether. But here is the compassion and tender mercy of God, he sees our faithless hearts, but never changes his love to us, as Samuel knew, when he said, 'the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake : because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people,' and Jeremiah, when he added, 'Thus saith the Lord ; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off the seed of Israel *for all that they have done*, saith the Lord.'"

When the party drove home, Mary, who thought she had perceived something of a coolness in the manner of Mr. Forbes to her friend Cora, found an opportunity of asking if any thing particular had occurred. Cora told her that in their walk she had spoken on religious subjects, and expressed her strong approbation of the doctrines held by the Rector of Drayford ; that Mr. Forbes appeared annoyed, and tried to persuade her that he carried points too far. She then said that she had made no progress in religion for years, and had enjoyed very little of its consolations ; which she attributed entirely to having been mistaken in her views, and that having now been led to see differently, she desired greatly to be enabled

by the Spirit of God to embrace opinions which she saw tended to such blessed results. Mr. Forbes, she thought, seemed vexed, but she added, "I see no reason why Mr. Forbes should wish to interfere with my opinions, whatever they may be;—however, I trust I shall not be permitted to be influenced by any one in a matter of so much importance; for I feel certain that I was groping in the dark, and had I remained in that state of error, I should never have made any progress: besides, no one knows how miserable I have been at times, because I could not understand that I was completely justified by the blood of the Saviour. How beautiful was that text which your friend quoted, 'If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then I will also cast off the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord.' I never remember to have heard it before. I took such comfort from the last words, 'for all that they have done,' for it is the '*all that I have done*' against so gracious a God that grieves me now, and before used to make me so unhappy and so unthankful. I used to entertain such hard thoughts of God, but I can rejoice and praise him a little now, because I see his unchanging love to his children; and I hope soon to be able

to praise him more, when I see more clearly. I know that my views are still very dark, but I read of nothing but loving kindness and tender mercy in the word of God; and I trust my unbelieving heart will in time be melted down by it, and that I shall feel constrained to rejoice more and more in the wonderful, and, to my weak faith, almost incomprehensible sufficiency, that appears in the Saviour."

CHAPTER XXI.

' I DO NOT FRUSTRATE THE GRACE OF GOD : FOR IF RIGHTEOUSNESS COME BY THE LAW, THEN CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN.'—Gal. ii. 21.

' IF I YET PLEASSED MEN, I SHOULD NOT BE THE SERVANT OF CHRIST.'—Gal. i. 10.

' THY WISDOM AND THY KNOWLEDGE, IT HATH PERVERTED THEE.'—Isaiah xlvii. 10.

ON the following morning, as the Rector of Drayford was about to take leave of Mr. Henry Conroy, at whose house he had slept, Mr. Forbes was announced. He expressed himself pleased that he had arrived in time to pay his respects, and hinted that he had hoped to have had a further discussion, in a more private way, on the subjects alluded to during the preceding evening.

" You think then, that they were treated of rather too publicly, I conclude," said the old Rector, smiling.

" I think it hardly advisable or safe to discuss

such deep and mysterious points of religion in a mixed company ; indeed I am of opinion that the less such subjects are entered upon the better, unless it be under circumstances like the present."

"I would, however, my dear Sir, before we enter on the subject proposed, just observe, that you scarcely state the case fairly in supposing me to deliver my sentiments in a mixed company ; for I hope I am not often found except where the society is at least professedly Christian, in our sense of the word. And with respect to your objection to such deep and mysterious points being brought forward, I must be allowed to say, that if they are deep and mysterious, they are, nevertheless, doctrines which have been 'revealed to babes,' although denied to the wise and prudent ;—and doctrines also which I boldly venture to affirm, are intended to be the strength and rejoicing of every ransomed sinner's heart. I am aware, and I deplore it, that in this day of dim and clouded light, any topic of religious interest is preferred to the plain and simple gospel of Christ Jesus.—We have Christian duties, Christian feelings, Christian obediences, Christian charity, Christian exertions, we have, in fact, the whole circle of 'the things which accompany salvation,' — but salvation itself,

and Christ, the key-stone, the foundation, the Alpha and Omega, are by some marvellous over-sight, almost passed over in silence."

"But, my dear Sir, would you not have the practice of a Christian, as well as his creed, brought into constant view? and is not the work of Christ *in us* as important and as worthy of consideration as what He has done *for us*? It seems to me that I should ill discharge my duty to my parishioners, if I preached to them only the pardon offered to sinners, and neglected to show them the way in which Christ purifies them from sin. And I certainly think it quite necessary to demand some evidence of their belonging to the Saviour?"

"I very cordially agree with you, my dear brother, in requiring the evidence you demand; but I question whether the subjects of conversation alluded to, would lead to the result desired. I am of opinion that they would not. Nothing can be of such importance to us as this inquiry, 'Do I belong to Christ?' But I cannot think that the question is likely to be satisfactorily solved by trying ourselves by the standard commonly set up, and therefore I object to the making our own feelings and our own conduct the principal topic for conversation; it can lead to no good, the creature is altogether too

depraved to admit of his ever attaining peace by the law, he can never come to any correct conclusion but that of the apostle Paul, 'I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me;' or,—if he is not miserably deceived by his own treacherous heart,—'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' While, if he is self-deceived, he is only inflating himself the more by dwelling on powers and qualities, which, in fact, have no existence in the corrupt nature of man. I consider it to be one of Satan's chief devices, to endeavour to lull the soul into a fatal notion of its own ability to render 'a sincere though imperfect obedience;' it is his aim to persuade us, that although we cannot keep the law fully, we certainly have it in our power to go a considerable way towards answering its requirements; and, deceived by this specious reasoning, so flattering to the pride of man, we imagine ourselves capable of 'fulfilling the conditions upon which salvation is offered,' (to use the unscriptural jargon of the present day,) and trust to the Redeemer's mediation to complete the work for us. Many, very many, I fear, who are now thinking that they have prophesied in Christ's name, and in his name 'done many *wonderful works*,' will find in the end, that the Lord does

not acknowledge them as his. If the real believer is betrayed into so lamentable an error, he is unable to find any peace ; hence we are so frequently distressed by seeing the children of God, —while their views remain dark,—so cast down, and so fearful. But their Master does not suffer them always to remain in an unenlightened state. He pours his truth into their minds sooner or later. I have just been looking over some passages of Hooker with Mr. Conroy, and must shew you how beautifully and how clearly he expresses this ; ‘ Howsoever men, when they sit at ease, may vainly tickle their hearts with the vain conceit of I know not what proportionable correspondence between their merits and their reward, which, in the trance of their high speculations, they dream that God hath measured, weighed, and laid up, as it were, in store for them ; yet we see by daily experience, in many of them, that when the hour of death approaches, when they secretly hear themselves summoned forthwith to appear, and stand before the bar of that Judge, whose brightness causeth the eyes of the angels themselves to dazzle ; all these idle imaginations do then begin to hide their faces. To name merits then, is to lay their souls upon the rack ; the memory of their own deeds is loathsome to them, they forsake all things

wherein they have put any trust or confidence : no staff to lean upon, no ease, no rest, no comfort then, but in Christ Jesus.* And I was particularly struck with the testimony of our late respected and lamented brother, Legh Richmond, who, as he stood with eternity full in his view, and all the vain deceits of life fading away, exclaimed to his friend,—‘ Brother, we are only half awake,—we are none of us more than half awake. Strong evidences, nothing but strong evidences will do at such an hour as this. I have looked here and looked there for them,—all have failed me ; and so I cast myself on the sovereign, free, and full grace of God in the covenant by Christ Jesus ; and there, brother, *there*, I have found peace.’ Mark that dying man’s testimony, my dear friend ; —unimpeachable as was his life to the eye of man, he found that he could stay his mind upon none of his evidences ; they all failed him, as they must every enlightened heart, and he could rest on nothing but Christ. This he as expressly said in speaking to one of his children on the doctrine of assurance, as connected with a holy walk. ‘ See,’ said he, ‘ how holily and lovingly Archbishop Leighton walked with God, because

* Discourse on Justification.

he believed that his salvation was safe and settled,—that he was chosen in Christ. Try to expand your views; look at the magnificent scheme of salvation,—the contract between the Father and his eternal Son. How much better to look out of self, and see all perfected in Christ. You will never be happy and strong till you grasp the covenant plan of redemption. You live upon self too much; you will get misery and despair, but nothing else, by looking to yourself. You must live upon Christ; he has done all for you, if you could but believe it.' A similar testimony was given by our late friend, Dr. Buchanan, in the preamble to his last will, which I can readily find in his memoirs. It runs thus; 'I, Claudius Buchanan, of Little Ouseburn, make this my last will and testament. I commit my soul and body to Jesus Christ, the Saviour of lost sinners, of which sinners I am one, the chief of sinners; but I trust I have obtained mercy; and I look for eternal salvation through the obedience of Christ unto death, even the death of the cross. I account the origin of my salvation to be the love of God the Father, who loved my soul in Christ its head before the foundation of the world. I renounce all works as a claim of merit. All my works have been mixed and sullied with sin and

imperfection. Whatever has been acceptable to God is his own, even the work of the Holy Spirit; it is not mine.—Glory be to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever and ever. Amen.’ Do you see how entirely self is renounced here, with all its performances, and the sole glory given to Christ Jesus?”

“I have first to remark,” said Mr. Forbes, “that I conceive that Dr. Buchanan held high Calvinistic views.”

“I beg your pardon for interrupting you, my dear brother, but Dr. B’s. biographer styles him ‘moderately Calvinistic,’ stating that his views were ‘truly scriptural, and in perfect unison with the doctrines of the church of England;’ and that, in reference to the doctrines stated in his will, he followed ‘many of the greatest divines and brightest ornaments of the church; with Whitgift and Hooker, with Davenant and Hall, with Usher and Leighton.’ ‘And (as the biographer goes on to state), where, it may safely be added, so far as mere human authority is concerned, are more illustrious names to be found? Or who will venture to throw any contempt upon opinions thus accredited and adorned?’—I also will venture to say, that I could with little difficulty furnish such a list of esteemed worthies of our church,

who held, and preached, and bled for the very doctrines now in disrepute, as should confound many of their opposers. Look to the times of persecution ! look to the days of the Reformers, for the truth of this assertion : and I will also assert, that if the preachers of our modern Gospel could be listened to by those bold and faithful dispensers of God's truth, they would hardly recognize them as labourers together in the same vineyard ! ”

“ But, my dear Sir, I wish to ask this question :—Is it not very evident, from the doctrines you advocated last night, and are now supporting, that you do away with all excitement to exertion ? It seems to me that you even deny the necessity for it. Surely any one taking your view of the subject has no occasion to think of good works at all, since he is neither capable of performing any, nor would they benefit him if he could. I cannot see of what use preaching, or exhortation, or indeed any discussions on religion can be, if works are to be set aside as an evidence of true faith.”

“ My dear brother, as an evidence to man of the reality of our faith, I consider them necessary ; is it not said, ‘ by their fruits ye shall know them ; ’ but if you will give me leave, I will explain somewhat more fully

wherein I conceive your error lies, and where I lament to see so many of the preachers of the present day fail. You do not distinguish between the Law and the Gospel; you mix them up into a system "which takes something from each, and yet is very little like either." Now a man cannot be under the two covenants at the same time; he must be under the one or the other, not under both. An unregenerated man is under the law, because he knows nothing of the Gospel, and cares nothing for it; but the believer, who has been taught by the Holy Spirit to embrace the Gospel, is under the Gospel covenant, and is free from the law of works, as a covenant claiming obedience at his hands. 'Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace,' for 'the law was our schoolmaster until Christ,'—'but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.' No! certainly, after that the law has, as it were, led us unto Christ, we do not desire to go back to our former taskmaster."

"You allow," said Mr. Forbes, interrupting the old Rector, "that the law leads to Christ: now that is what I think, and therefore I judge it necessary to preach it, in order to awaken the sinner to see his need of the Saviour, and

to quicken the believer to secure his interest in Christ."

"In some instances, indeed, the law leads to Christ, inasmuch as it shows the sinner his incapability of fulfilling it, and thus teaches him that life can never be obtained by it; but I fear it is too often preached, not with the intent, distinctly expressed, of 'writing the sentence of death in the consciences' of the unconverted;—but as something which all, converted or unconverted, are to strive to fulfil, with a view *thereby*, 'through the merits of Christ,' to reach heaven. And, after all, in too many cases the law leaves a man where it found him, sinful, and sinning to the end, without any wish to find a remedy. But how can you imagine that the law, from which Christ hath redeemed us, is to have any power in quickening the believer to secure his interest in Christ. My dear brother, the law has nothing to do with a believer in respect to his interest in Christ, his justification, or his salvation! He is wholly freed from its demands as a covenant by which he is to be justified, and equally free from it in regard to its condemnation; is it not written, 'as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse:' now no one will say, that a believer is under the curse, when he reads

the words following,—‘Christ *hath* redeemed *us* from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us!’ Whoever, therefore, looks to the law for justification lies under the curse;—there is no middle path between the law of works and the Gospel, nor is there any scriptural way of mingling them up together. Either I am justified by faith in Christ, “who redeems them that are under the law;”—or I am condemned by the curse, which is denounced on ‘every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.’”

“You hold, then,” said Mr. Forbes, “that a man who believes in Christ is entirely set free from the law?”—“Certainly, that is my opinion, viewing it as a covenant.”—“And consequently, that a believer may regulate his conduct as he will; the law has no demands upon him, and he may sin on as his inclination leads?”

“The law, as I have said before, has not any demand upon him, seeing that he ‘is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;’ that he is complete in Christ Jesus;—that he is ‘dead to the law,’ and ‘married to another.’ But what is the conclusion;—not as you infer, that “he may sin on as inclination leads,” but, that he is ‘married to another,’ that he ‘should bring forth *fruit unto God.*’ Ah! my dear brother,

the error lies here ;—that they do not know what an effect is produced on the heart by the union between Christ the living head, and the believer. It is from a sense of the infinite love of God, that the poor condemned sinner, on hearing his freedom from the terrors of the law, and the gifts of reconciliation and adoption through Christ Jesus, looks to Him, his spiritual head, with gratitude and joy, and exclaiming, ‘What have I to do any more with idols?’—he ‘is joined to the Lord,’ and ‘is one spirit,’ (1 Cor. vii. 17) ‘strengthened in the inner man.’ He abides in the vine, and therefore brings forth fruit; he has faith, and therefore he overcomes the world.”

“Of what use, then, do you conceive the Law to be, if believers have nothing to do with it?”

“We are told that it was added ‘because of transgression.’ It served to show such as were ‘ordained unto eternal life,’ the full extent of the covenant of works; it showed sin to be exceeding sinful, and so ‘wrought death.’ ‘When the commandment came,’ says the Apostle, ‘sin revived and I died;’ and he tells us the end for which the law was given;—‘moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death,

even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.' Thus the Law having entered, as we see, 'that offences might abound,'—'that sin might become exceeding sinful,'—'that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,'—that the 'ministration of death' might be seen, and the curse made manifest,—it has now answered its end and must give way to a better covenant, even to Christ Jesus, who is '*the end of the Law* for righteousness to every one that believeth'—who was 'made a curse for us,' and through whom 'we are *delivered* from the Law, that being *dead* wherein we were held.' This I conceive to be the sum and substance of the nature and origin of the law; to which I might indeed add, its tendency to improve the moral state of society, to check crime, and to promote a spirit of harmony."

"You do then allow that the law has a tendency to improve the moral state of society?"

"Certainly I do."

"But you deny its power to improve the morality of a believer?"

"I deny its power to effect that end, if it is set up as a covenant binding upon him. The law has been rung in the ears of mankind for centuries, and it has never been known to lead

one individual to heaven. Adam could not keep it in his state of innocence; and is it likely that man in his ruined and depraved condition could render it even a decent obedience?"

"It appears to me that those who hold your views, not only open a door to licentiousness, but (if I may so say) cast discredit on the law itself."

"Nay, my dear brother, that can never be. I may use the Apostle's words, 'I had not known sin but by the law.' 'Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.' Christ has 'magnified the law, and made it honourable.' Is it not said that He himself was 'made under the law?' and did He not fulfil all its demands? did He not render it perfect obedience? did not the Father 'see of the travail of his soul' and was 'satisfied?' He offered one stupendous 'sacrifice for sins,' and 'for ever sat down on the right hand of God.' 'By that one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;' and by that 'one offering' and 'one sacrifice,' believers are acquitted for ever from the claim of the law. There cannot be two payments. When our Lord exclaimed, 'it is finished!' and yielded up the ghost, the debt of every believer was paid, in the person of the Great Head of the chosen family

of God ; and to suppose that a believer is again liable and responsible for the debt discharged by his covenant head, is not only a gross misrepresentation of Scripture, but an insult to the work of the great Redeemer, and a shameful dishonour done to his name. If a man of known respectability had but given his pledge to become responsible for the debt of another, it would be considered an indignity to refuse his assurance ; but here is not a promise, not a pledge, but the condition of the law actually fulfilled by the Son of God, the debt liquidated to the last fraction, and the ‘handwriting blotted out,’ that no remembrance of the ordinance might remain ;—and yet there are persons who will charge believers with the debt,—which they persist in maintaining is unpaid ! Now I can account for this infatuation only in one of two ways ;—either such persons never were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and consequently cannot possess spiritual discernment ; or they know little of their own heart, and are therefore not aware of its habitual tendency, to the last, to find something in self which is to be added to the work of Christ to render their salvation more secure. If such persons actually (though but in part) saw themselves as they are, and felt the plague of their own hearts, instead of talking of “ the degree

of perfection to be attained in the flesh ;” of “ sincerity of obedience ;” and of “ purity of motive ;” they would gladly cry out, ‘ blessed indeed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are *covered* ! Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not *impute* sin.’ But as they cannot be satisfied with the measure of the Apostle Paul’s experience, ‘ I am carnal, sold under sin ; what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that I do ; for I know that in my flesh *dwelleth no good thing*,’—they resolve, with a pertinacity that is really wonderful, that as for them they will find *something* good in the flesh ; that they will not come to the discovery that *they* are carnal, sold under sin ; and as to being justified fully and freely by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, they do not altogether need it, for they can assist in their own justification. I am persuaded that they are not aware of the dishonour they do to the great ransom provided. The notion of sharing the work with the Saviour is so absurd and so weak, that one could almost smile over the strange folly and ridiculous pride of poor human nature ! But when we come to look at the Saviour’s all-sufficient atonement, to know that every point of the law was fulfilled to the last iota, that He drank the cup of His Father’s wrath to

the very dregs, and that His precious blood flowed for the guilt of all who ever had believed in Him, or ever should believe; then, I say, we cannot but wonder, and sigh, and from our very soul lament, that beings beloved by such a Saviour, and redeemed at such a cost, should so pour contempt on his blessed name. Oh, my dear brother, it is a lamentable thought; it is a disgrace to professors; it is enough to call for heavy judgments upon us."

Mr. Forbes said he could not see the subject in the same light with the Rector, he saw the precept and the promise perpetually joined together, implying that, sinful and prone to evil as man undoubtedly was, obedience was unquestionably required of him.

"Yes, my dear Sir, the promise and the precept do certainly go together, but not in the order too frequently stated; the promise takes the lead, the precept follows as the natural and unfailing consequent of the promise. And where this order is inverted, there is the mingling of law and gospel, an error pregnant with the worst consequences. But let us keep them separate;—give the promise fully, freely, and then take up the apostle's plan, who invariably exhorts to holiness as the effect of faith, and the result of a sense of adoption. '*Having there-*

fore these *promises*, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' ”

“ Ah ! there, my dear Sir, is not the apostle still preaching the law ? What is holiness, and what is the exhortation against filthiness of the flesh, but a part of the moral law ? ”

“ A part of the moral law, assuredly ; but not the law as a covenant, or as having any claim on a believer with regard to his justification or condemnation. You could not surely imagine that any one enlightened by the Spirit would deny that the law is a rule of life to the believer ! It is not only written on his heart, but it is constantly brought forward in scripture, as a standard for the regulation of his conduct.”

“ Well, then, my dear Sir, is not this admitting that he is under its influence ? ”

“ He is under its influence as a standard of excellence, as a transcript of his Father’s will, but he is not under its influence as a covenant, by the obeying or disobeying of which he secures or loses heaven.”

“ Then we come to this conclusion, as I said before, that, upon your plan, sin as he may, he cannot lose heaven, and that however holily he lives, he cannot improve his state.”

“ If a man really be regenerate, and really trust in Christ, the scriptures assure us he shall never fall away :—‘ Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out :’ and ‘ no man shall pluck them out of my hands.’ It is upon the certain conviction of the reality and infallibility of these assurances, that the believer has a motive sufficiently strong to urge him to diligence in his walk ; and the preacher who would employ the most powerful means of incitement, must use the apostle’s arguments, and exhort his people ‘ by the mercies of God,’ to present their bodies ‘ a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service.’ ‘ Ye are bought with a price : *therefore* glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are His.’ And, in speaking of the temptations which are common to man, he must add, ‘ But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear,—*therefore*, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.’ ‘ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify, *therefore*, your members which are upon the earth,’ &c. ‘ Put on, as the *elect of God*, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ;

forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any : even *as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* ' Walk worthy of God, who *hath* called you into his kingdom and glory.' ' Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. *Wherefore*, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.' ' Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people ; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.' These are arguments for exertion, founded entirely on what *has been done* for believers ; the sole motive adduced is that of gratitude. After our Lord had expressed his gracious love to his disciples, he added, ' if ye love me, keep my commandments ; ' and what real disciple of such a Master would not ardently desire in the inner man, to be found walking in the way appointed, knowing as he does, that ' neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Indeed, I should be very

much inclined to question the reality of that man's faith, upon whom arguments like these exercised no influence."

"Yet, my dear Sir, these considerations do not appear sufficiently weighty to deter individuals from the commission of sin; if David held the views which you have been stating, I think his failings, to speak with moderation, are not favourable to your argument."

"I would ask one question, was David a believer, or was he not?"

"A believer, certainly, and therefore ten-fold more guilty."

"Was he, or was he not, in the covenant, 'ordered in all things and sure;' and did not that covenant ensure eternal life to all within its compass? If he was beyond the reach of the covenant of works, he was unquestionably safe beneath that of grace: yet, that he fell into an awful depth of iniquity, no one will deny; but was that 'depth able to separate him from the love of God, in Christ Jesus?' Assuredly it was not! And I would reply to your question whether gratitude could be sufficiently weighty to deter from sin;—that if gratitude, under a sense of immense obligation, fails to prove a powerful motive to exertion, it is in vain to attempt to rouse by any other means."

“And so, my dear Sir, failing to kindle that feeling, you would reject all other methods of leading the wanderer back; and yet it seems to me, that in the Old Testament, not only exhortations, but warnings and threatenings were employed.”

“True, since they were addressed to those under the law.”

“Ah! not only to unbelievers, but also to believers.”

“Threatenings of temporal punishment and judgments to believers, my dear brother, but nothing of eternal judgments;—‘My mercy will I keep for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; *nevertheless*, my *loving-kindness* will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.’ Thus you see the warning of temporal punishment is very clearly set before us, but the loving-kindness is ours for ever. Why! you would do away with the grandest attribute of God, by denying his sovereign unchangeable love exer-

cised towards objects utterly unworthy of favour. The creature is found capable of showing kindness to objects little worthy of it, and his generosity will last through many demands, if he sees or fancies he sees something in the recipient which engages his sympathy or his compassion. But you deny to the Almighty Ruler of the universe those qualities which you allow to human beings ! It is his magnificent display of faithfulness, and unvarying loving-kindness to the fallen, guilty, and worthless, that exalts His majesty, and inclines the rebellious, unworthy creature, man, to fall down before Him in wondering and grateful adoration ! It is His raising to honour and glory a being, whose life has been but one course of opposition to His will and defiance of His authority, that confounds the self-accusing sinner ; it is the continuance of marvellous and unchanging displays of fatherly care and tender compassion, that softens the stony heart, and melts it in gratitude and love. David (the instance you have chosen) was a decided evidence of this ; he felt, and bore witness to the Lord's loving-kindness and faithfulness to the last ; but he also proved the truth of that warning, ' Be sure thy sin shall find thee out.'—Death,—rebellion in his family and in his kingdom,—afflictions, heavy and grievous, followed

him for a long succession. If he sinned, he also suffered, and if he forsook the Lord, the Lord appeared (according to his word) to forsake him. We have in his penitential Psalms a sufficient proof of the anguish of his mind, endured in the recollection of those sins which drew upon him the anger of his God. It does not appear that his distress arose from an apprehension of the consequences he had drawn on himself, but his soul was melted under a consciousness of ingratitude against a God of infinite love and compassion. ‘Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.’ And this will be the cry of every penitent believer, when he sees his sin, and returns, ‘Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.’ I believe there is no species of suffering so keenly felt by a real Christian, as that which invariably follows on the commission of wilful sin; all the comforts of the world will not serve to give him peace then,—nothing but the blood of Jesus, seen and apprehended by faith, will heal the self-inflicted wound.”

“Yet, my dear Sir, David appears to have enjoyed rather a long season of ease and quiet of conscience, after his crimes!”

“True, it does appear so, and a most

profitable, though a very humbling lesson to human nature ; and if such an evidence of the utter corruption of the heart fails to show us what we are, I know not what will. People imagine that human nature in its unrenewed state is capable of doing some good, or at least of accepting the good which seems within their reach, and that it is endued with freedom of will to choose or to refuse salvation. Yet here is a regenerate soul, a man brought into immediate communion with his God, accustomed to hear His word and to be guided by its precepts, and taught by the Spirit to discern between good and evil ; yet when left to his own heart's direction, so utterly dead, so sunk in sin, so grossly blind, that he appears forgetful of his God, unconscious of his guilt, and wholly careless to its consequences. Alas ! poor human nature is but a pitiable, empty thing ! and had not Nathan been sent with his commission, we know not to what lengths the king of Israel might have gone."

"He could scarcely have fallen farther, to have stopt short of eternal condemnation."

"Perhaps so, but that was a point settled 'in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world.' A believer's salvation is independent of himself, happily for us, but his temporal

comforts, and his enjoyment of God, are promised upon certain conditions.—‘The diligent’ are to be ‘made fat ;’ they that seek, to find ; they who call, to be answered ; faith is to overcome the world, and to be employed in resisting Satan ; and in proportion as this faith in Christ is exercised, victory, peace, and happiness will be ours ; —not ours in reward of any quality found in the creature, or for any acquired worth, but solely as the free and gracious gift of God in Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness is treasured up and bestowed on His people. The believing Jews under the old dispensation, assuredly understood and lived the life of faith, and there was (we cannot doubt it) the same distinction that exists in this day between the two covenants ; ‘Do this and live,’ was the demand of the covenant of works ; and, ‘do it not and die,’—the only alternative. Such as, by the light of the Spirit, saw its perfection and their own insufficiency,—its unrelenting exactions and their own helplessness,—gladly renounced all hope of fulfilling its demands, and looked to Christ as ‘the *end of the law* for righteousness to every one that believeth.’ Hence they passed, together with every truly enlightened Christian, from under the covenant of works to the covenant of faith,—two things as distinct surely as day and night, for while

the one cries 'obey and live,—disobey and die,' the other says, 'I have redeemed thee from the law;' Thou art 'married to another;'—'I have chosen thee' to 'inherit the kingdom *prepared* for *you* from the foundation of the world;' 'It is your Father's good pleasure to *give* you the 'kingdom;'—ye are 'my sheep,' 'and I *give* unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand;'—'Because I live ye shall live also;'—'I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;'—Thou art 'predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ;'—Thou art '*accepted* in the beloved;'—Thou hast 'redemption through His blood, and forgiveness of sins;'—Thou art 'justified freely by His grace,' thy 'sins cast into the depths of the sea;'—for He hath saved thee, and called thee with an holy calling, not according to thy works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was *given* thee in Christ Jesus before the world began;'—Thou art '*complete* in Him;' 'Perfected for ever;'—'Sin shall not have dominion over thee;' for I came to deliver my people *from* their sins;'—Thou art '*not under* the *law*, but under *grace*,' and 'my grace is sufficient for thee;'—'Ye are his workmanship,

created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained, that ye should walk in them;—for ‘it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure;’ and he ‘hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth.’ ‘Now therefore, consider what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and ‘walk worthy of God who hath called thee unto his kingdom and glory.’—‘Let your light shine before men.’—‘Put on, *as the elect* of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,’ and ‘grieve not the Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption;’—you are ‘called to glory and virtue’ ‘through the knowledge of Him,’ and to you ‘are given exceeding great and precious promises, that *by these* ye might be partakers of the divine nature;’—wherefore be diligent, and ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;’ for ‘when He shall appear, ye shall be like him,’ and ‘every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as He is pure.’ ‘Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord alway.’ ‘Rejoice’ that ‘your names are written in heaven;’ seek to be ‘found in Him, not having your own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ,

the righteousness which is of God by faith ; ' and remember, that ' whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace ; ' for ' by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified ; ' therefore, ' he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' I have now brought forward a variety of passages, my dear brother, from Scripture, with the hope of convincing you that wrong motives are appealed to under the idea of inducing holiness in the creature. I think I have sufficiently made it manifest, that gratitude and love are the only scriptural, the only safe, and the only successful incitements to practical godliness. In the passages I have quoted, there is nothing of slavish fear, nothing of self-interest ; the believer is not urged to work *for* life, but *because* life is *already* his ; he is not told to bring forth fruit that he may abide in the vine, but to abide in the vine that he may bring forth fruit. Do you see the difference, for it is one of vast importance."

Mr. Forbes said he saw what the Rector implied, but begged to return to an expression in the foregoing part of the subject, and to enquire whom he considered to come under the denomination of the ' truly enlightened Christian.'—"Perhaps," he added, "I may not be ranked under that particular class?"

"I will give you my sentiments on that subject presently, if you will give me leave in the mean time to inquire if I have not in some degree succeeded in showing, that what we are accustomed to hear termed high doctrines, do in fact tend to promote high practice ; that the one is the cause, the other the effect ; and that whatever may be said of their apparent liability to misconception, they do plainly and directly lead to, and inculcate purity and devotedness."

"Certainly this is not the impression generally received of high doctrines : the more common idea is, that they tend to sanction a lax system of morals ; by teaching that the believer's salvation is wholly independent of his mode of life, or of his exertions to please God."

"I am aware that this is the usually received opinion. Persons are apt to imagine that man can only be acted upon by the motives of servile fear and self-interest ; and certainly if these were the motives held out in Scripture, we should very justly be liable to the reproach of condemning them ; but as the gospel incitement to exertion is *love*, not fear ; *gratitude*, not self-interest ; we surely may still continue to direct the attention of our hearers to their miserable estate by nature, and to the full and free salvation offered to them. We tell them of

the love of God the Father, 'who hath called' them 'unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus;'—of the love of God the Son, in taking their sins upon him, bearing the full punishment, and working out a glorious righteousness, in which 'to present' them 'faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;'—of the love of the Holy Spirit, in testifying of Jesus, and in shedding upon us those gracious influences by which the souls of believers are raised to communion with their Triune God. By this method of preaching we consider, and are surely authorised to consider, that personal holiness is best promoted, and, if we may so speak, the honor of God best attempted to be maintained."

"But how, my dear Sir, do you use these doctrines in preaching to unbelievers? What purpose can be answered in setting before *them* such subjects as election, assurance, and final perseverance? Were I to tell a company of worldly men, of unconverted sinners, that their salvation was in no respect in their own power, that they could do nothing towards it, but that it was the sole province of the Holy Spirit to awaken and convert, and that such alone as were 'ordained to eternal life,' would 'believe,' I should expect my hearers to tell me it was of no

use for them to try, since it was wholly out of their power to help themselves, and they might as well sit down at their ease, leaving their destiny to be determined as the decrees of Providence should appoint."

"I should first reply to such reasoners, that as Christ gives eternal life to 'whosoever will' come unto Him; and to 'him that is athirst,' a welcome, no man has a right to say that he is refused; nor is any one justified in sitting down carelessly, while means are appointed of God for the salvation of all who are willing to renounce their own righteousness, and to go to the Saviour for justification. But, further, I would ask you, whether, having ascertained the real nature of the truths of the gospel, we are at liberty to give them to our hearers in a partial or moderated form? We have the word of God transmitted to us as the sole and infallible guide,—the only standard of right and wrong. There are certain doctrines inculcated in it, opposed, it is true, to the wisdom and the pride of man, but, nevertheless, fully and clearly set forth. Are we, I would inquire, warranted to select from that Word some particular doctrines, to the exclusion and omission of others, and to make out a system of our own, which, to our weak and darkened judgment, appears more likely to answer the

end of winning souls to Christ than a fuller exhibition of the whole truth? And I would also ask, whether the success which attends this moderated and refined declaration of the gospel has been such as to encourage the belief that it is really acceptable to God, and has been blessed and sanctioned by Him?"

"I think, my dear Sir, you must be aware that both the preaching of the gospel, and the apparent effect of that preaching upon the people, have increased amazingly of late years."

"I am aware that there has been a great apparent improvement within the last fifty years among the clergy. That portion denominated 'Evangelical,' has increased from a few individuals to many hundreds, perhaps thousands; and, out of the establishment, chapels and preachers have also sprung up in vast numbers; but the increase in the number of real Christians has been very far from commensurate. This is a day of great profession, yet who will say that there is proportionate devotion of heart? and to what shall we attribute this, but to a deterioration of the standard of doctrine, a lowering and modifying of the doctrines of grace, at the same time that the profession and preaching of the gospel, thus refined, was, indeed, rapidly on the increase? I would appeal to you, whether

the tone of modern evangelical preaching is not considerably altered from the standard maintained by Newton, Berridge, Romaine, &c."

"I do not deny that this may be the fact, but I question whether we are losers by it; I think that numbers, vast numbers, would, humanly speaking, be won over to the gospel when exhibited in a shape less offensive to human infirmity; and I think we do now see a prodigious increase of religion."

"Ah, my dear brother, a prodigious increase of religion, in truth! but not of the religion of Jesus Christ. Thousands will receive, as far as profession goes, the smooth and pleasing form of gospel delivered by many of the clergy of the present day. Young men enter the church, and preach doctrines very much like the gospel; they maintain the attendance of good congregations; they improve their morals, and we will not deny that, occasionally, even higher success attends their ministry; but does this prove that the enmity to the cross has ceased!—Far from it!—Let but a faithful and full statement of 'the whole counsel of God' be brought forward, and both minister and people will evince, by their disapprobation, that the enmity of the natural mind has not been rooted out. It has not, perhaps, previously appeared, because, in the

usual course of such a ministry, the offence of the gospel is carefully avoided; nothing is said to rouse their natural animosity against the doctrines of grace, and the enmity of the unconverted heart is lulled to sleep."

Mr. Forbes inquired what meaning the Rector attached to the expression, the 'offence of the cross;' and what he so exclusively denominated 'the doctrines of grace.'

"By the doctrines of grace, I mean that series of scripture truths, which, taken together, constitute 'the Gospel;' the 'good news' to sinful man. News, by which he who feels himself to be not only guilty, but helpless; not only fallen, but unable to rise; not only under condemnation for his past offences, but also in the daily and hourly commission of new sins, may learn how even a guilty, helpless, fallen, powerless, and worthless sinner may be raised to happiness, to security, and to glory. He learns by the light of the Holy Spirit, that for such a sinner the Saviour came, and that to him the Spirit is freely given to enlighten, the Son to redeem; a righteousness in which to stand complete; and a justification for his acquittance from all demands of the law. In these 'glad tidings' he also sees, that by virtue of an union with Christ, he brings forth fruit; has a new

principle communicated which sanctifies his soul ; separates it from sin and sets it apart for Christ. He does not find the old man improved or changed, but he experiences a newly infused principle, by which, *in proportion as it is in exercise*, the carnal nature is subdued, heavenly objects become visible, and the glories of Christ, as revealed by the Spirit to his sight, make earthly pride and earthly vanities seem worthlessness and dross ! Again, these glad tidings show to the believer, the high and happy estate in which he stands, who has ‘received Christ Jesus the Lord,’ in that he is ‘complete in him ;’—‘unblameable, and irreproveable in His sight ;’—‘perfected by the one offering ;’ having renounced all thoughts of self, and its works, and counting all things loss for Christ ; of his ‘righteousness, and His only,’ does he ‘make mention.’ He finds that Christ ‘is made of God unto him, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,’ while he is made, in Christ, not only righteous, but the very righteousness of God himself ; insomuch, that to use the words of Hooker, ‘Such we are in His sight, as is the very Son of God himself.’* This simple and single dependence on Christ, is all that poor

* Discourse on Justification.

helpless man can give. He depends on Christ for faith, for sanctification, for all the fruits of the Spirit; for repentance on account of sin; for power to turn away from it; for boldness to declare the truth before those who withstand it; for patience to bear their contempt and obloquy. In all the circumstances of life, the self-emptied, self-distrusting believer, looks to his Saviour, and is strengthened, comforted, blessed, and preserved; he has no longer any 'confidence in the flesh,' and feels that he is insufficient to think any thing as of himself, but knows that his 'sufficiency is of God.'

"In all this, my dear Sir, we have nothing of the duties of the gospel."

"Duties of the gospel! My dear brother, excuse my saying that such an expression does not sound to me very intelligible: what is the sense of 'duties of glad tidings?'"

"I mean that man should be told, that it is his duty to obey the precepts of the gospel."

"It is true, that man, as a creature, owes the deepest attention to every word of his Creator; but it is equally true, that he cannot receive the gospel in its true import of glad tidings until the Spirit has taught him his need of it. As to obeying the precepts, as we have shown (or rather attempted to show),—it is morally

impossible that he should render any acceptable obedience, without faith, since 'what is not of faith is sin,' and without union with Christ there can exist no love to him."

"But you would not preach to your hearers that they had it not in their own power either to believe, or to obey the precepts?"

"I certainly should; nay, I must; for 'woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' Faith is the *gift* of God, and I must not make it the work of man. 'As many as are ordained to eternal life' will believe; and God, who works by means, will assuredly bless a full and faithful declaration of his word to the conversion of souls. If I thought that this desirable end was in any degree contingent on mere human exertion;—if I conceived that by wise and judicious statements, by keeping back this truth, and carefully guarding the other, I could reach the heart of fallen man, certainly I should gladly make use of every expedient likely to produce the effect. But as we are too well aware that this is not the case;—and that a man not only cannot go to Christ 'except the Father draw him,' but that he even then '*can receive nothing except it be given him,*'—I should be awfully sinning against truth, shamefully wronging my Master, and wickedly deluding souls, were I to preach

a salvation of a man's own achieving, whether by a faith induced by his own reasoning powers, or by works, 'deserving grace,' as the Papists used to teach, 'of congruity.' Our commission is to preach the truth; to 'preach Christ,' whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear."

"But how can you justify the teaching your hearers, that they have not the power, even if they had the will, to perform any good,—when at the same time you admit that you are in the habit of exhorting them to good works? There appears to me an evident contradiction in such a system."

"In the first place, I do not tell my people that they have not the power even if they have the will, for if they have the will it is a sign that the Holy Spirit has produced that will, and the power will certainly be given. And, secondly, I exhort to good works, seeing I am commanded to do so, and knowing that sanctification is immediately connected with faith, and that the Spirit is promised to work in us 'to will and to do' God's pleasure. I am well aware that there is no power in man to do good works, but as the means and the end are inseparably connected, never to be disjoined; I exhort, as the means enjoined, and God blesses

these means according to his promise ; the word of exhortation is sent home to the bosoms of the hearers by the Spirit of God, and thus effectually operates. The souls who feel their own insufficiency and entire emptiness, wait upon God for an increase of His Spirit, and *they* receive it ; such as still expect something from self (be it what it may) return as they came. Our duty still is, to preach Christ, and to humble the sinner. We know that not one sincere desire after truth will ever be engendered in any bosom, except the Spirit implant it there ;—and therefore, in expectation of the blessing promised to a full and free declaration of salvation,—without terms, without conditions, without reservation,—I would give it my people, regardless of the opposition excited in the minds of the worldly-wise ; and indifferent to human opinion, so far as I saw it opposed to the will of God. But now, my dear Sir, you have heard enough of my plan of preaching, give me leave to ask what is yours, and what success has attended it ?”

Mr. Forbes said, he had been but a few years in the ministry, and could not be expected to have much experience. He had found his congregation to consist of two classes of persons ; one knowing something of the Gospel, and the other knowing nothing. He had commenced

his labours by endeavouring to instruct the unenlightened ; he had preached for some time on the evidences of Christianity, expounded on the principal facts of our Lord's history, and then selected various passages of Scripture, generally choosing such as were likely to tend to the advancement of personal and practical religion."

"And now you will permit me to ask, what fruits you have been allowed to witness, of your labours during that period? "

"I am afraid I must own that the fruits have been few : perhaps I have as much success as my neighbours ; but that certainly is not great. One or two persons have, I believe, been brought to inquire into these things, and hopes may be entertained of them. And, on the whole, the disposition of the people appears to be improved ; but there is, certainly, little or nothing that I can call a decided change of heart and life, in any of them."

"From this statement, my dear brother, you will allow me to infer, that on the whole, your experience is not altogether satisfactory on the question, whether the course you have adopted, was, or was not, the most scriptural ; or the plan best adapted to the end proposed."

"I cannot deny that the result has not been

satisfactory, but I question whether the course followed by others would have been productive of better effects."

* "That rests with Him who prepares the heart and gives the answer; but allow me to remark, my dear brother, that as you have never tried the other course, you are scarcely enabled to form a correct opinion of its effects."

"Perhaps I am not; but I judge from the opinions of others, and certainly such a line of preaching has not been commended to my judgment. I far more frequently hear it spoken against than approved,"—

"Much according to its reception mentioned in the Acts, 'As for this sect it is every where spoken against.' And why so? What is the line of preaching that I would recommend to you? It is none other than that so eloquently pleaded for by our brother Legh Richmond, in his sermon before the Church Missionary Society. He says, 'Preach Christ, as a free, full, and all-sufficient Saviour to the greatest of sinners. The sheep of Christ, whether at home or abroad, will hear and know their own good Shepherd's voice, and none other.—Preach to them the blood of Christ, its atoning and healing power.—Feed the flock of Christ with the wholesome bread and pure water

of life.—*Mingle nothing with their food ; disguise it not with any self-accommodating explanations.* It is not the equivocal language of a mere fashionable profession of the Gospel, that will convey the word and substance of salvation.—Christ living, Christ obeying, Christ dying, Christ risen, Christ ascended, and Christ interceding for sinners ; this is the true bread of life. Our commission to feed his sheep runs thus ; ‘ Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ *Hence, the love of the Father in giving sinners to Christ ; the love of the Son, in dying for their redemption ; and the love of the Spirit, in sanctifying and preparing them for glory, are the grand themes for Christian meditation.* When these invaluable truths are enforced in a practical and experimental manner, the sheep of Christ are truly fed, according to their good Shepherd’s design and commandment, and so shall they live and prosper.’ ”

“ But surely there is too little said here of the duties of practical religion.”

“ On that point let us hear Mr. Richmond in another place, where he says, ‘ The graces of the Spirit, such as love, patience, goodness, faith, &c. are good things for others to judge

us by ; but it is Christianity, as received, believed in, rested upon, loved, and followed, that will speak peace to ourselves. *By looking unto Him*, we shall grow holy ; and the more holy we grow, the more we shall mourn over sin, and be sensible how very short we come of what we yet desire to be. None are so holy as those who mourn that they are not more so. While our sanctification is a gradual and still imperfect work, our justification is perfect and complete : the former is wrought in us, the latter *for us*.' But now I have laid before you some of my sentiments on preaching, you will pardon me, if, as an old man, and perhaps possessing some experience, I proceed to state rather more fully, wherein I conceive much of the preaching of the present day fails."

Mr. Forbes expressed himself obliged by the Rector's offer, and he proceeded. "I have observed you to make much use of the word 'religion ;' and I have frequently heard ministers speak of 'the duties of religion,' the 'necessity of inculcating religion.' Now I cannot help fearing, that instead of preaching the Gospel, 'religion' is too often the object preached ; and I heartily wish the subject were investigated, for in this distinction I must think lies much of the error and the bad

success of the preachers of the present day. Multitudes of young ministers, desiring to be conscientious, imagine that when they inculcate 'religion,' they necessarily preach the Gospel ; and many professing Christians are under the same error ; but the two things are as distinct as cause and effect ; and this habit of confounding them together leads inevitably to much ignorance of the nature of both."

Mr. Forbes said he did not understand the distinction ;—he found the word made use of in Scripture. St. James spoke of 'pure and undefiled religion.'

"I do not mean to say that the word is an improper one, or to proscribe its use, when applied in a limited and correct sense. It is useful to have words which express a low as well as a high standard ; and in describing the state of a man whom I could not decidedly pronounce to be a converted character, I should be glad of an expression which would convey my meaning, and should say he was 'religiously inclined,' or 'religiously disposed.' But what I wish you to observe is, that 'religion' is not 'the Gospel,' nor will the preaching of the one produce the same effects as the preaching of the other. The 'pure and undefiled religion' spoken of by St. James, is the *effect* of the grace

of God received in the heart, and must be kept perfectly distinct from the cause by which that effect was produced. Our object, as preachers of the Gospel, must be, to show our hearers the way of salvation. Now, even the '*pure religion*' described by the Apostle, is not 'the way of salvation.' If one of your people came to you, under distress of conscience, and with the jailor's cry in his mouth, 'What must I do to be saved,' you would not tell him that the way to be saved was 'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspeckled from the world.' You would, you must,—if you would not have his blood upon your head,—return him an entirely different answer. You must say to him, in the words of the Apostle, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' And if this would be, as it must,—the substance of your sermon to a single individual, why should the tenor of your ordinary pulpit discourses be entirely different. You may reply, indeed, that your congregation does not consist of a number of awakened individuals, but for the most part, of such as are more or less careless about their state. But then you should remember, that if it may appear useless to proclaim salvation to those who are not enquiring for it, it is equally unavailing to preach

‘religion’ to the unregenerate mind. No one can possibly possess that ‘religion’ mentioned by the Apostle ; or, in other words, no one can bring forth any fruit, *until* he is renewed by the Holy Spirit. For ‘the carnal mind is enmity against God ; for *it is not subject* to the law of God, neither indeed *can be*.’ What, therefore, is to be expected from inculcating ‘religion,’ and exhorting to ‘religion,’ but that the multitude should conceive of Christianity as nothing but a code of morals, given by Christ, a little more strict than they find it convenient to follow. All, however, or nearly all, will acknowledge the necessity of attending to ‘religion ;’ and some, therefore, are very regular at church and sacrament, deny themselves the card-table during Lent, give alms, and hold themselves to be ‘blameless touching the law.’ These are ‘religious’ persons, just as Papists, or Turks, or Hindoos, may, in their own separate ways, be ‘religious.’ While those who find it inconvenient, just at present, to adopt this plan, make up their minds to do so at a more convenient season ; and thus quiet their consciences for the passing hour. But how is it to be otherwise, when the Gospel which contains ‘the record’ of Christ is omitted, to make way for ‘religion !’

I do assure you, my dear Sir, I have heard several sermons delivered, even by clergymen considered evangelical, in which much was said of religion, but not one word of Christ or of His Gospel ! There was exhortation enough to persuade men to become ‘religious,’ to ‘seek the knowledge of religion ;’—and there was abundant mention of ‘the Christian,’ what he should do, and what he should be ; what virtues he was to cultivate, and what temptations to shun ; while, at the same time, throughout the whole discourse the very name of the Saviour was omitted. Now I do not deny that these exhortations were good, and laudably intended ; but they lost their value because they were substituted for the Gospel, instead of following as the effects which should result from reception of those ‘good tidings.’ Had I been listening to the discourse of a Socinian, nay even of a heathen moralist, I might have heard precisely the same arguments. No one will maintain that *that* is preaching Christ, or preaching the Gospel ; and none can wonder that in such cases the great end of the ministry fails. Winning souls to Christ is to be effected (humanly speaking) by preaching Christ ; and the promise is, ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.’”

“I hardly think, my dear Sir, you allow

sufficient scope for the minister's exhortation. I do certainly agree with you, that the Gospel should be clearly stated; but I think it possible for a minister to preach all the doctrines he conceives the Gospel to contain, and yet to comprehend and state them as 'the benefits derived from religion.'"

"Possible, it certainly may be; but such a preacher will have changed the language of scripture for an unscriptural mode of expression; and for no end, that I can understand. I cannot consider it to be either lawful or expedient for a minister to address a congregation on 'the benefits of religion,' or the advantage of 'being religious,' when he ought to be bringing before them the great plan of salvation, and showing them the importance of a spiritual union with Christ."

"Yet I cannot help thinking that there is more meaning than you seem inclined to allow, in such exhortations as these; 'Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' 'I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.'"

"You cannot, my dear brother, attach more meaning to such holy exhortations than I do, and I should consider no discourse complete or

sound in which they were omitted; but (as I think I have before stated) you and I view them in two very different ways. I consider them as exhorting believers to let the world around them see and remark their *endeavours* to live above the vanities of life;—to let men see their anxiety to be found seeking the knowledge of Christ, their indifference to earthly things, the degree in which their hearts and their affections are set on heaven, their greater integrity, liberality, and disinterestedness towards others; and thus by their distinctness, as a body, from the world, and their oneness in the Saviour, to make it visible that they are a separate people, condemning the ungodly ways of ungodly men, and seeking for themselves ‘a better country.’ This is the way in which I receive those exhortations. You look upon them as the voice of the law, still requiring obedience at the hands of man; this is the difference between us.—We do not disagree as to the value and importance of the preceptive parts of scripture, but as to the best method of enforcing them. You would urge them upon believers as forming a part of the ‘conditions’ of salvation; and the motives you would endeavour to awaken, would be those of duty, and self-interest. I, on the other hand remembering that Christ hath said that

the whole law is comprehended in two precepts, love to God, and love to man,—and considering that the latter flows naturally out of the former,—would seek to raise in the believers' heart, a principle of love to God, believing *this* to be the only correct way of preaching the precepts of the New Testament. But how shall love be called into exercise in the heart of a human being? How would you seek to gain the love of your child;—not by lessons of duty, or threats of punishment, but by manifestations of your love to him. And so with a child of God, the way to his heart is not by the voice of the law, but of the Gospel. Indeed, the law has now, in fact, no threatening voice for believers, and as to fulfilling it meritoriously, and rendering good and perfect service worthy of reward, that I trust we know better than to expect to do."

"Does not our Lord, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, when describing the final judgment, address the faithful as having done works, if not good, yet acceptable to Him?"

"He does;—the expression is, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in.' They, knowing the cor-

ruption of their own hearts, and conscious (as all truly enlightened beings are), of the pollution that had mingled with their best actions, very naturally reply, 'Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or naked, and clothed thee?' Their Master, in his great love, passed over their want of real purity of motive. He had declared, that the servant who had *done all* was but an *unprofitable* servant; but, justified, and sanctified, and presented spotless through His blood, a gracious welcome was bestowed; and their wish to show kindness to their fellow-creatures was in his good pleasure mentioned, as shown towards himself. If any human being could actually have performed any one pure action, or done any thing intrinsically good, you would say that the apostle who had been 'caught up to the third heaven,' and 'heard unspeakable words,' might have been supposed capable; yet his language is, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,' and that, though 'to will is present with me, yet how to perform that which is good, I find not.' But as we are now speaking of the necessity of preaching *Christian obedience*, which certainly ought not to be omitted in any scheme of preaching, let me ask you, what proportion the real Christians of your con-

gregation form, with respect to the whole of your hearers."

"I fear but a very small one."

"Do you think that one-tenth of your hearers are really regenerate persons?"

"I should fear not."

"I suppose you are correct in your apprehensions? And now let me ask you, Whether you do really and cordially believe, with the thirteenth Article of our Church, that 'works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea, rather, for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.' And if so, whether you judge it a rational mode of proceeding to devote your whole attention to subjects with which, according to your own belief, nine-tenths of your people can have no concern, to the exclusion of that great topic upon which hinges the eternal welfare of every individual of the whole."

"How do you mean that these are 'subjects with which they have no concern?' Can holi-

ness of heart and life be justly characterized in this way ? ”

“ Do not misunderstand me. Holiness of heart and life are, indeed, demanded by the law of God ; and if you preach that law as ‘ the letter ’ which ‘ killeth,’ and with the distinctly expressed object of driving the sinner out of his own self-righteousness, I shall find no fault with you, provided always that you do not omit to proclaim the *refuge* provided of God for those who desire to be ‘ found in *Him*, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God, by faith.’ But we were speaking of *Christian obedience*, which you have acknowledged, according to the thirteenth Article, to be as impossible to be rendered by the unregenerate, as it is to ‘ bring a clean thing out of an unclean ;’ and which you nevertheless make, if I understand you correctly, the sum and substance of your pulpit ministrations.”

“ I confess that I have rather directed my pulpit addresses that way, because I felt the difficulty of entering at any length upon the doctrines, without going into controverted points ; upon many of which I have not yet satisfied my own mind. Indeed you must be aware that many have held the same opinions

you have now expressed, and afterward forsaken them for others of a more moderate stamp."

"I am aware that nothing is more easy than to take up a set of opinions, and to lay them down again when we are tired of them."

"Yes, but I was speaking of opinions admitted by the mind, and discarded upon more mature judgment."

"That also I admit; a man may be convinced by the force of argument of the reasonableness of certain sentiments, and he may adopt them in his head, and maintain them until his confidence is shaken by others being presented, more flattering to the pride of human nature, and more plausible in their appearance:—but what does this prove? but that head-knowledge is of no avail in spiritual matters, and that, in subjects in which the heart is so entirely concerned, conviction must go deeper."

"But you seem to infer that such views as you hold, are liable to be rejected on a fuller scrutiny of the judgment: which confession, at all events, places reason on the contrary side."

"Truly, my dear brother, human reason is but a dim and miserable light when used as a guide to spiritual things;—'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:

for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' ”

“ That passage, I imagine, refers only to man in his natural and unregenerate state.”

“ I do not conceive that it has that limitation, for we are told, ‘ it is the Spirit that quickeneth,—the flesh profiteth nothing ; ’ and as the believer never parts with the ‘ old man, on this side of eternity, but the flesh and spirit war on together to the end ; ’ so I consider that the natural reason, uninfluenced by the Spirit, still points only to material and earthly things. And I very much fear, that, as it was with the wise and learned Greeks, and with the legal and self-righteous Jews, so it is with many of us now ; ‘ the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world, unto our glory, ’ is unto the one ‘ foolishness, ’ and unto the other a ‘ stumbling-block ; ’ but unto those whose ‘ faith ’ stands not ‘ in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God ; —who are not wise, not disputers of this world, ’ whose ‘ understandings ’ and whose prudence are brought ‘ to nothing ; ’—it is ‘ Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. ’ ”

“ Do you not think that a man, whose mind has undergone a thorough change, and who waits

on God for the promised aid of His Spirit to enlighten and direct him, has a right to expect to be led into the whole truth?"

"Certainly I do; but, alas! I fear very few of us are brought so to cease from self, that we count our understanding and our boasted intellect to be 'foolishness,' our minds unstable, 'brutish' and 'ignorant,' our 'judgment perverted, our wisdom folly, our 'thoughts vain.' I think that if we were all brought to this state we should quickly see a prodigious change. When men found themselves deficient, and saw and felt that 'the flesh,' or their own understandings, would 'profit nothing,' they would at once go to the Spirit for quickening; and thousands who are now in darkness would come to the light."

"Perhaps there is some truth in what you state; I am inclined to think that we do lean too much to our own understanding, and not sufficiently to the teaching of the Spirit."

"Be assured, my dear sir, that this is the reason why we know so little, and why our practice is so deficient; why men go about 'to establish their own righteousness,' and will not 'submit themselves to the righteousness of God;'—why many believers are 'weak and sickly, and many sleep;' and also why there is such

an increase of profession, and yet so little sound doctrine."

"You think that those who hold different views from your own are necessarily not sound; but, my dear sir, admitting for a moment the supposition, do you not conceive that there may be different degrees of soundness?"

"There may, certainly, be more or less error, and a greater or lesser departure from the truth; but I should not say that any preaching was sound, or any views sound, which did not embrace the *whole* Gospel. There might be a mixture of truth combined with error, but if it was not the 'truth, as it is in Christ Jesus,' it must be false doctrine. I do not call preaching 'religion,' for instance, preaching the truth. I call that, preaching 'with wisdom of words;'—'with enticing words of man's wisdom,' and which 'makes the cross of Christ of none effect.' But I call the preaching of the apostle, who 'compared spiritual things with spiritual;'—who preached 'Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God;' and that He was 'made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;'—that Christ is ours, and we are Christ's;—that no man should therefore 'glory in men, but he that glorieth

should glory in the Lord;—*that* I call preaching the truth; and thus every faithful minister of God must preach, if he would honour his Master, or seek to win souls. It was well said, I think by Cecil, that “half the truth is a lie;”—and we might with equal confidence say, that half the Gospel is no gospel at all; and that unless a comprehensive exhibition of *all* the doctrines revealed in Scripture, and received and set forth by our Church, be maintained and inculcated, the truth as it is in Christ Jesus is not preached. I would therefore simply ask, my dear brother, whether you have thus preached the truth,—the whole truth, or not?”

“I hope I may say, with confidence, that I have endeavoured to do so; though I can scarcely suppose that I have succeeded according to your peculiar views: there are some high doctrines, it must be admitted, which it is difficult to—”

“—You cannot present a greater difficulty to my mind, than in making use of terms like these; my dear brother must excuse me, but I cannot hope for any clear understanding while we talk of ‘peculiar views,’ and ‘high doctrines.’ I would discard all such phrases; and opening the Bible in the spirit of simplicity and sincerity, I would ask, have you preached *all* the doctrines,—whether termed by men ‘high’ or ‘low,’—which

you there find clearly revealed? To name one, have you, for instance, during the time you have spent in the ministry of divine things in this neighbourhood, ever brought forward to your people, the doctrine of election?"

"Ah! Election! Yes, that is, I know, a favorite topic with preachers of a certain class,—"

"—In which class probably a little reflection would induce you to place the great Apostle of the Gentiles;—but I was not asking if you made this doctrine a 'favourite topic,' or the leading or exclusive subject of your sermons; (I trust it is not so in mine;)—my inquiry was, whether you *ever* introduced it, or whether, like many others, you entirely suppressed it."

"I must confess I have never yet brought it forward in any way, being myself uncertain how far to receive it."

"That is what I feared, and indeed what I had heard: yet this doctrine which you doubt how far to receive or declare, appears to me to be one of the most prominent features in the plan of salvation revealed by God to man. And it is distinctly set forth throughout the whole of the Scriptures. Moses clearly and repeatedly declares it: his successors as unequivocally state it: the royal Psalmist received the doctrine, and dwelt upon it as the strength and rejoicing

of his heart; and the prophets make it their constant theme. Our Lord in his discourses frequently asserts it; and in the gospel of St. John, in the xviith chapter, leaves his last testimony to the disciples, of his distinguishing, his electing love. I need not carry you through every book of the New Testament, in order to prove that this doctrine pervades the whole. I would rather refer to the writings of St. Paul, who, being the especial Apostle of the Gentiles, we may surely regard as an example of a Christian preacher; and would ask, how, after perusing his epistles, a minister of the Gospel can satisfy his conscience in excluding from his discourses all allusion to a doctrine, which that Apostle sets forth in the course of his writings more than twenty times?"

"Why, I must certainly allow that the doctrine appears to be frequently stated in the Scriptures; but you are doubtless aware that the real meaning of these passages is variously defined. Some contend that nothing more is meant by them than the prescience of the Almighty;—that he foresaw and foreknew those who would obey his commands and receive his gospel; and that, in consequence of such foreknowledge, he determined to save all such, on account of their faith and obedience."

“ Yes, I know that men have invented various schemes of interpretation, with a view to explain away this doctrine, so especially obnoxious to the pride of human nature. But my inquiry was, whether you had ever, under *any* interpretation, declared to your people this great scriptural truth.”

“ I don’t know that the subject ever occurred to me in this light :—finding it to be a disputed point I might have thought it best to omit the mention of it altogether.”

“ Do you then imagine that a doctrine which occupies so prominent a place in the word of God, and which our Lord and his inspired followers dwell upon with such frequency and plainness, —may be omitted from its place in the preaching of the Gospel, merely because men choose to dispute about the meaning of the term ? Are we justified, do you think, in such a line of conduct ; and has the inspired volume so little weight with us, that to avoid division of opinion we may take upon ourselves to banish from our creed, or refuse to preach to our people, doctrines which we admit to be maintained therein ? ”

“ In acknowledging election to be a scriptural doctrine, I still think that before we can deliver it to our hearers with any confidence, we should clearly understand its precise nature and

character. And I must confess I am inclined to receive it as arising out of the foreknowledge of God. I can fully understand that the Almighty might act upon a knowledge of future events, and might thus decree the salvation of nations and of individuals. But I cannot reconcile to my mind the idea of an arbitrary decree, electing certain persons out of mankind, without regard to their merits ; and determining their salvation in a manner totally irrespective of their own exertions or deservings. I conceive that this idea does away with moral responsibility."

"And is there not a grand difficulty raised, on the other hand, in assuming that the decree of election is a consequence of good works foreseen. Before you can fairly infer that the Almighty elects in this way, as a reward of merit, you must reject one fundamental doctrine of revelation, namely, the utter depravity of human nature. If He elects from a foreknowledge that the objects of his favour will, of themselves, render good works ; it follows, that men have a natural capability of performing good actions, which is utterly denied to them in the word of God. And you will have to disclaim, also, some of the Articles to which you have already subscribed ; for in the xiiith you

acknowledge that all 'works done before the grace of God, have the nature of sin,' and are displeasing to Him. And I think you will find it difficult to explain, how works which 'have the nature of sin,' could ever entitle or recommend the doer of them to become, in the foreknowledge of God, one of his elect, chosen unto eternal life."

"Well! but God may foresee that some men will receive and avail themselves of his grace, in order to salvation, while others will not;—that some will accept the offer of the Holy Spirit, while others will reject it."

"Or, in other words, that 'the heart of man answereth *not* to man;' that 'the heart is *not* deceitful above all things, and *is not* desperately wicked,' and that 'every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart' is *not* 'only evil continually.' But that some men are innately disposed towards God, and possess minds not naturally at enmity with God; being differently framed from others! The Apostle's rejection of all claim to human merit would be disputed by such reasoners. He asked, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou, that thou hast not received?' They would argue that they differed in *natural* disposition, and in a readiness to accept the

offers of salvation. That they were *naturally* willing to embrace the offered aid of the Holy Spirit, and thus become heirs of eternal life;—while others, not feeling disposed to attend to the call, and not caring for the assistance pointed out to them, refused the invitation, rejected the Saviour, and thus were lost. That they had received much, they would be willing to own; but the reason why they had received it, was, that God foresaw that they should render him a proportionate return of good works;—he therefore elected them, bestowed his holy Spirit upon them, and ultimately saved them. The final reason, therefore, of the salvation of the one, and the condemnation of the other, is, according to this creed, that the one has, *naturally*, good and virtuous dispositions, which the other has not; and that, therefore, God chooses the one, and passes by the other.”

“Well! but, my dear Sir, may not a man hold these views, and yet give God the glory of having created him with, or implanted in him, dispositions to embrace the grace offered; which dispositions were not given to others?”

“Certainly, he may give God the glory of having implanted in him a disposition to attend to the invitations of the Spirit; but what then? He only returns to the point from whence he

was endeavouring to escape, namely, that unless God had inclined his heart to seek him, he had never done so; and that the real and only cause of his salvation must be in the sovereign electing grace of God, totally irrespective of any merits of his own. Thus the notion of an election arising from 'good works foreseen,' even if he continues to hold it, becomes a perfectly nugatory one. It is, in this case, not only a fiction, but also a useless fiction. For there is no material difference between holding, as you have supposed some one to do, that God, exercising mercy as a sovereign, decrees to give faith and repentance to certain only of the sons of men, and elects all such as he shall thus endow with faith and repentance, unto eternal life;—and holding, as I do, with St. Paul, that 'He hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world,' not *because* we, in his foreknowledge, *were*, but, '*that we should be* holy and without blame before him in love.' The difference in the way of stating the doctrine is of small consequence. But, with respect to the other notion, of some intrinsic goodness in certain of mankind, not implanted there by God in his special mercy, but innate, and in itself the cause of the election of such persons by God to be his people;—I can only say, that if men would

but endeavour honestly to receive the authority of Scripture, they would soon see the folly of imagining that God could ever see or foresee the existence of a particle of good in any human being, except he had first himself implanted it. They would find that He chooseth and createth His people *unto* good works, not *because* of them. And that 'the election of grace' is in no respect grounded upon works foreseen. For, saith the apostle, 'if by *grace*, then is it no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.' Is it not here undeniably clear, that in the view of the apostle Paul, the election of a certain 'remnant' out of mankind, was grounded, not upon what that remnant had done or should do to merit favour ; —not upon the supposed foreseen obedience to be rendered by them ; but upon the sovereign will of God ;—upon his free grace in Christ Jesus : that it was no debt ;—no reward for services performed, or to be performed ;—but an act of sovereign mercy. Indeed, were it not thus, where would boasting end ? We should not be content to limit our exultation to this life ; but on reaching heaven, should continue the theme ;—"my good disposition towards heavenly things, my inclination to seek God, my readi-

ness to accept the grace proffered, procured me an interest in the blood of atonement :” and, reviewing their progress through life, and the steps of their earthly pilgrimage, they would be full of triumph and self-exaltation in their supposed attainments. “ My attention to the means of grace,—my diligent endeavours to serve God faithfully,—my fervent prayers,—my devotedness to religion,—my indifference to the world,—my exertions to promote the cause of Christ, finally procured me, through the mediation of the Saviour, the place I now enjoy in heaven ; and which others have lost through their negligence, their inattention to means, their disuse of prayer, their attachment to the world, and their want of energy in the Lord’s service.” Such would necessarily be the language of a being who does not recognize the sovereign will of God, as the sole ground and cause of his salvation.”

“ How is it that so many faithful and zealous ministers of the Gospel hold, that the election spoken of in scripture, is grounded solely on God’s foreknowledge of the faith and obedience which the subjects of it will render.”

“ I can only suppose that they know very little of their own hearts ; and thus calculating on powers to which human nature has not the slightest claim, they embrace that view of the

subject which is most agreeable to the pride of man. But as the scripture asserts his universal and entire depravity, I cannot hold such persons clear from the charge of shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. Nor can I imagine how men of wisdom and discernment can support the notion of foreseen good works being the cause of election; since the *very* merits they thus build upon, repentance, faith, and holiness, are simply the *gifts* of God:—‘by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the *gift* of God: not of works, lest any man should boast!’ ‘Unto you it is *given* to believe:’ and ‘Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to *give* repentance.’ And if, when addressing your people on these graces, you state them, according to scripture, to be the gifts of God, and gifts not bestowed indiscriminately on all mankind;—you have thereby *implied*, and should not be afraid to declare, the doctrine of election. Again, our Lord expressly declares, that we do not choose Him, and cannot go to him, except the Father draw us,—‘ye have not chosen me, but I have *chosen* you;’ and St. John says, ‘Herein is love; *not that we loved* God, but that he loved us. We love him, because he *first loved* us.’ The inspired writers make election the act of God; some

modern divines would fain have it to be the act of man :—they would have him, by his meritorious deeds foreseen, elect himself : but, blessed be God, the work is his own from first to last ; and they who deny it delude many souls, and dishonour the Saviour they profess to exalt.”

“ After all, I cannot free my mind from an apprehension of the consequences of preaching this doctrine ; it surely appears to have a tendency to relax the motives to morality ?

“ That is, you cannot bring yourself to believe that ‘ *all* Scripture is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.’ Nor, although you have subscribed it, can you cordially assent to the Seventeenth Article of our Church, which asserts, that ‘ the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons,’—‘ and doth greatly establish and confirm their faith,’—‘ and fervently kindle their love towards God.’

“ But does not the same Article go on to declare, that ‘ for carnal persons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God’s predestination, is a most dangerous downfall,’ &c.

“ It does so, and I quite agree with it. But what would you argue from that admission ?

Because the ungodly may abuse a doctrine of Scripture, are we therefore authorised to conceal or suppress it? Acting upon such a system, we might close the Bible at once. Abuse there will be;—perversion of Scripture and of the preacher's meaning, there will be;—opposition and persecution there must be;—but notwithstanding all these, the duty of the preacher of the Gospel still is, '*rightly to divide the word of truth, giving to each his portion in due season.*' *Discrimination*, indeed, is a most essential part of the duty of a preacher of the Gospel. Without a distinguishing application of the various doctrines of revealed truth to the different classes of his hearers, little usefulness is to be expected. He is furnished, in the word of God, with 'milk for babes,' as well as 'strong meat for them of full age,' and he should dispense each in its proper season, and to its proper recipients. But many preachers, I fear, discriminate, not in the *application* of the doctrines of the gospel, but as to the *doctrines themselves*,—selecting and enforcing some, but suppressing others. Because it is true that strong meat is not food for babes, they judge it to be unfit for use altogether. They use milk and nothing else; and thus continuing to treat their people as babes, the people remain babes

to the end; 'unskilful in the word of righteousness,' and always requiring to be taught again and again, 'which be the first principles of the oracles of God.'"

"Do you not find that some, I will not say many, preach the views you maintain, and yet fail in the most important ends of their ministry?"

"It may be so; I am not aware of the fact, but I should conceive, in such a case, that the individual merely preached such views because he had been taught them; and so retailed doctrines which the Spirit had not stamped on his heart:—or that he was departing from Christ, and therefore yielding no fruit; in either case the blessing was not to be expected. Many, I fear, adopting the pure truth in their heads, and holding it as a theory, are content with their knowledge,—their hearts remain unimpressed,—they deny its power, and except they are touched by divine grace, perish in their ungodliness. Such as these do infinite harm to the cause; but of others we are persuaded better things, and things which accompany salvation: the gospel has reached them, 'not in word only, but also in power, and in much assurance;' and 'with joy of the Holy Ghost.' They 'shun not to declare the *whole* counsel of God;'—they go and 'tell what great things he hath done' for

them;—they ‘count it a light matter to be judged of man’s judgment;’—they know that in all things they shall be ‘more than conquerors, through him that loved them;’ and they ‘count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, their Lord.’ Until the power of the Holy Ghost is exerted to show a man the depths of inward depravity, and the plague of his own heart, it appears to me impossible for any one to see the worth of Christ;—to find him precious;—or to magnify divine grace. Commensurate with our knowledge of self, is our anxiety after Christ. If we do not see our sins, and are not tried and tempted by them;—if we do not feel it impossible to find any good in ourselves; and that to be saved we must have a Saviour who will be wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption to us,—who will be unto us a full and perfect Saviour;—we cannot have any just knowledge of Him, or any appreciation of His infinite and unsearchable riches. And if we have no clear conceptions of Christ, no appropriating view of him in his kingly and priestly offices, we cannot be said to have received the gospel. And if we have not received the gospel, what have we received? for *there* alone is the record which God has given of his Son, that in that

Son is life ; and ‘ he that entereth not ’ by *that* ‘ door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.’ I would say to you, my dearsir, seek to know more of Christ ;—to distrust more entirely your own heart ;—to lean less to your own understanding ;—to perceive more of the spirituality of the law ; that thereby (with the apostle Paul) sin might be detected and ‘ you die ;’—die unto the law, that ‘ the life ’ you henceforth ‘ live in the flesh, you may live by faith of the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you.’ We want more self-emptying, humble Christians ;—men who have ‘ no confidence in the flesh ;’—men who will stand forth boldly to condemn the lukewarm professor, as well as the ungodly worldling ; who will faithfully uphold all God’s truth ; who, instead of rising up to preach a well digested and well-arranged discourse (vainly thinking *that* the end to be sought) ; will go as empty, helpless sinners, with *bad hearts* and *weak heads*, to be taught by the Holy Spirit ; asking food which they may deliver in Christ’s name to his flock ; and seeking an unction from the Holy One to reach the hearts of preacher and people. It is not to be wondered at, that we have a poor gospel, lean hearers, and lukewarm, empty professors ! There is salt, indeed, on the

earth, but it has lost its savour;—the glory of Christ is clouded by the darkness of men's minds, and they see not that they want 'the anointing of the Holy One; they will not 'buy eye-salve, that they may see.' This is called a day of great light; and it certainly is a day of great activity in furtherance of various religious objects;—large subscriptions are gathered; funds accumulated; missionaries sent to foreign lands;—but where is the pure unadulterated truth among ourselves? Where is the full and free gospel of Christ Jesus preached at home into our own bosoms? Where are the faithful disciples of Christ;—those who will follow him through evil report as well as through good; who, feeling themselves profitless, unworthy, and vile, praise him in accents of grateful and adoring thanksgiving, trampling on the merits of the creature, and magnifying and exalting the work of the Redeemer. Light is said to be fast spreading, but how few and faint are the gleams of the Sun of Righteousness upon our hearts! Oh! that he would arise with healing in his wings! that he would manifest himself more unto his people, 'as he doth not unto the world,' that it might no longer with truth be said unto the professing Christian, 'Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee.'

CHAPTER XXII.

' I AM DISTRESSED FOR THEE, MY BROTHER JONATHAN : VERY PLEASANT HAST THOU BEEN UNTO ME.'—2 Sam. i. 26.

THE time drew near for Mary's departure, and she took leave of her friends, and especially of Cora Wilmot, with regret, yet under the hope of meeting them another year : but when the moment came for parting from her brother it was not without many painful feelings that she bade him farewell, and turned to gain another glimpse of his residence before the road finally shut it from her view. There is something in the tie of natural affection ; in the power of early habits ; and the association of youthful ideas, which has an irresistible influence over the mind ;—an influence which neither time nor change of circumstances can entirely destroy. Persons nearly related may be separated for years ;—may have heard little of each other ;—and may even appear to have become incapable of the warm

and kindly feelings of nature ; but let them meet again after any length of absence, and for a time, at least, the heart will seem to have regained its early feelings ; and to have returned to its former habits. Memory recalls a thousand affecting scenes of childhood, and records numberless instances of early impressions ; which, for the moment, banish the world with its interests, its cares, its anxieties, and its heartless maxims. It would be well for us if feelings so excited could be fixed and rendered permanent ;—but, alas ! the heart falls back into its acquired habits ;—the feelings sink into their secret hiding place ;—and, the world, with its overwhelming torrent, again sweeps all before it. Happily it is not so with the believer in Jesus ; who, having a new principle to draw out and strengthen the feelings of natural affection ; retains them in the force and freshness of youth, long after time has acted upon the outward circumstances.

Mary loved her brother with a most affectionate attachment ; and although she knew he was in the possession of many of the best blessings of heaven and earth ; she could not part from him without many feelings of regret. She felt much oppressed during the remainder of the day ; and only found relief in lifting her heart to God, and supplicating his

gracious favour for her brother and for herself. Her uncle was also much attached to his nephew; but his character of mind led him to conceal his feelings; and he appeared engrossed with the newspaper, or full of remark on the country through which they passed. "The harvest had been remarkably abundant; the hedges looked unusually thick; the roads were very good after the rains; the rooks were very busy gathering their food; the sheep looked rather thin; the pigs had particularly high backs; the children were very healthy looking; the cottages neat; the gardens well kept; the timber fine; the grass uninjured by the late rain; the soil was rich; the river looked well through the trees; the post-boys drove very slowly. "Ah! there is a sight which I never see without pain; an old man breaking stones as the last refuge from starvation or the work-house." Mr. Conroy threw the poor man a half-crown, and continued his remarks. "Henry feels as I do;—I one day found him, with the hammer in his hand, breaking granite for an old man who was allowed so much for the lump. Henry has a generous nature!"

On this topic Mary could not be silent; and before the subject was dropped, they found themselves in sight of the Grange.

Mr. Gray saw them from his study, and hastened down to meet them ; his wife they found seated in the drawing-room, surrounded by a very lovely group of children, to whom she was reading some interesting stories ; while they appeared to be listening with great attention. She looked very happy amidst them, and rose to welcome the visitors with great cordiality.

Mr. Gray was an old friend of Mr. Conroy's, though a much younger man : he had married a near relative, and retired to a small estate called the Grange. Here his wife became impressed, from the perusal of a 'Practical View of Christianity,' with the importance of real religion ; and she immediately commenced a diligent study of the sacred volume of inspiration ; through which means, and without any human aid, she appeared to have become established in the faith ; and was now anxiously seeking to lead her husband's mind to the only subject which she felt to be worthy an immortal being's attention. It pleased the Sovereign Disposer of all hearts to withhold this desire from her ; and although it was a trial, almost as severe in its nature as any that can reach the heart of man ; and she felt it most keenly ; yet she was enabled to cast her burden upon the Lord, trusting Him to sustain

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her, and to increase her faith. Another cause of uneasiness was, that the gospel was not preached in the neighbourhood, so that she seemed very much cut off from every outward help; but this trial she was also enabled to leave, as she wished to do all her other anxieties, in the hands of her heavenly Father. Her husband was an exceedingly amiable man; kind and affectionate to his wife and children, and much respected in the neighbourhood. The children were very hopeful, and a great source of interest and comfort to their mother. She had very lately lost her youngest child, an infant; and although desirous of being wholly resigned to the will of God, the shock had been very severe; and the mortal part of the believer was still suffering, while the spirit bent in submission to the blow, inflicted by a compassionate and tender Father.

She was very much pleased at the idea of having the society of a Christian friend, an enjoyment that was of rare occurrence with her; and Mary was equally happy to find a person whose views and sentiments entirely accorded with her own. They spent many a delightful hour together; reading the scriptures and comforting each other's hearts, by conversing on the wonders of redemption, and the

infinite love and compassion of Him who had fulfilled all righteousness, and wrought out an everlasting salvation, ordered in all things and sure.

A few days after their arrival, Mary was passing the door of an apartment which was open ; on her way down stairs to take an early walk ; and hearing the voice of a child reading aloud, she entered the room, and perceived one of the children, a little girl, about six years of age, sitting on a footstool reading to herself. She was quite alone, and Mary heard her repeat the words—" O Lord, hear ; O Lord, forgive ; O Lord, hearken and do ——" the child had a sort of a lisp, and continued, laying down the Bible and speaking to herself, " that's a very pretty prayer, and very pretty words, and I shall read them to my mamma." She coloured, on seeing Mary, but replied to her questions with great readiness ; she said the Bible was a very pretty book, and she was very fond of reading it to her mamma, and that she had another book that she was very fond of. " I know it almost all by heart," said the little girl, " I will say it to you some day, if you like." " I should like to hear it now, if you will say it." The child perfectly astonished Mary, by repeating about forty pages of ' Little Henry and his Bearer,'

without hesitating, or scarcely stopping to take breath. "I will say the rest of it to you tomorrow, if you like, for Susan will want me now to brush my hair." Mary said she should be very glad to hear her at any time, and commended her choice. She asked for the loan of the book, and took it away to read for the third time; for whoever has once read that interesting and admirable little work will read it again and again with pleasure. Mary thought there was scarcely its equal for interest of story and purity of gospel-truth, delivered in simple language, adapted to the taste and capacity of children.

When she met Mrs. Gray she related the little scene which she had witnessed. Mrs. Gray told her that she had been exceedingly anxious always to lead her children to think of the Bible as a very interesting book; and that she always spoke of it to them as far beyond all other books in interest as well as in real value. "And thus," added she, "as soon as they can read pretty well, I find that they all think it a great pleasure to come to me in a morning while I am dressing, and read a portion. I don't let them read too long, for fear of diminishing the interest. I explain a little as they go on; but I make a rule never to continue if they look weary, for the pleasure would then cease, and the Bible

would be like another book. Many persons think it so necessary that children's minds should be stored with scripture, that they think they can never read or learn enough. I have seen this in several instances in which it did not answer: the children become tired, it is like over-feeding, they cannot digest it; and although they may have been brought to consider the Bible as the best and most sacred book, they secretly feel a dread and weariness of it which is quite lamentable. I think also, that we are too apt to make the study of the scriptures a more solemn and awful business than the nature of children renders advisable; or indeed than the subject itself demands. It seems to me such a privilege to be allowed to open the revelation of God's will to man, and to read what He did for His people of old, and what He does for believers in the present day,—that I cannot understand the taking it up in a spirit of constrained awe and solemnity. Of course, no one taught of God would open the book with levity; but I think that a cheerful happy look suits best with the interest we ought to feel in its contents."

Mary perfectly agreed with her friend, and begged to be allowed to be present at their morning reading party. Accordingly the next

day she joined them. Four little girls and a little boy were seated at the table; each with a Bible before them: they made room for the visitor, and found the place in which they were reading, the history of Daniel.

CHAPTER XXIII.

‘AND YOU SHALL TEACH THEM YOUR CHILDREN, SPEAKING OF THEM WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE, AND WHEN THOU WALKEST BY THE WAY; WHEN THOU LIEST DOWN, AND WHEN THOU RISEST UP.’—Deut. xi. 19.

“Now,” said Mrs. Gray, smiling affectionately upon her children, “we will see what became of Daniel, whom we left in the lion’s den.” They all looked much interested. “Did the cruel lions eat him up?” asked the little boy of five years of age. “My little boy must not speak till his sisters have done reading, and then we will tell him all about it.” The child crossed his arms on the table in an attitude of attention, and the reading commenced at the sixth chapter and 18th verse. When they had finished the chapter, Mrs. Gray asked them many questions, and made several remarks herself; then addressing the little boy, she repeated the substance of the story in words suited to his comprehension. “What a prettystory, mamma!

tell it to me again." His mamma said she must attend to his sisters, but that she would tell it him in the evening, and, kissing the child, sent him away to fly his kite in the garden. "What did Daniel mean by his innocency, mamma? I thought no one was innocent," said the eldest girl. "No one is really innocent, my dear, but Daniel's heart had been changed by the Spirit of God; and then he had a new will which enabled him to choose what was pleasing to God, and so by God's grace he avoided what he knew would be displeasing to Him;—therefore he said he was innocent, because he had a sincere desire to do what was right, and had not been deterred from his duty by the wicked men who sought his ruin, but prayed as before three times a day, and gave God thanks. And do you not see, in the twenty-third verse, that no hurt befel him, '*because he believed in his God.*' He trusted his heavenly Father, and feared Him more than man, and, as we read, 'gave God thanks,' even when he knew he should be cast into the den of lions." "Oh, I am afraid, mamma, that I should have been in such a fright, that I could not have prayed at all." "Oh," said another, in a good-humoured manner, "don't you know that if you had been Daniel, you would have

had God to comfort you ; for don't you remember what we learnt in our catechism, 'if I love God and seek to please Him, I shall have God for my Father and friend for ever.'"

"Very true, Ellen, for He promises to help every one who trusts Him: cannot you tell me a text on the point?" "Yes, mamma, 'Call upon me in this day of trouble, and I will hear thee;'"

"And I remember," said another, "that when the wicked king Manasseh was afflicted and prayed to God, He heard him." "But," said a third, "Manasseh was a very wicked man, a very bad cruel king, and I don't care for him."

"My dear child, we should not talk so, for if God forgives a wicked man, so must we; besides, we don't know if we were placed in his situation, what we might do; he had every thing he desired at his command, and plenty of people who flattered him, and perhaps no one to tell him of his faults as you have, and so he thought he might do just as he pleased, and mind no one." "Ah, but," replied the child, who was naturally inclined to cavil, "he was such a very very wicked man! and he made the people do as naughty things as himself, and so I don't like him." Her mamma looked at her steadfastly, and said, "I know a little girl who not many days back did some very very naughty

thing that her mamma had told her not to do; and she not only disobeyed her orders, but tried to make her sisters as naughty as herself." The child blushed deeply, and the tears stood in her eyes. Mrs. Gray saw that her remark had produced the right effect, and she changed the subject; asking who could tell her what important end had been served by Daniel's trial. They all answered that Darius saw that Daniel's God was the 'living God and stedfast for ever,' and therefore he commanded that He should be worshipped. "Do we learn any other lesson?" "To trust to God always and not to fear." "Any thing else?" The eldest girl reflected a moment, and then added, "Is it to give God thanks at all times?" "Yes, my dear, and a most important lesson it is; we should always try to keep in mind what a good and kind God He is, and how mercifully he has provided for the salvation of His people; besides having bestowed upon us every thing that is best in this world." "Mamma," said the youngest girl, "are all people God's people?" "No, my dear, every one is His child who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, and loves Him, and reads His word, and tries to please Him; but those who do not believe in that good and gracious Saviour, and do not love Him, nor read His word, nor try to please

Him, are not His children.” “But, mamma, if they repent and love Jesus Christ, and grow good, will not they be His children?” “What do you mean by ‘good,’ my dear?” “Oh, I mean if they love God, and read the Bible, and try to do what the good men spoken of there, did.” “The good men prayed to God to make them do what was right; for God had put His Spirit into their hearts, and taught them to wish to love Him, and try to please Him; and God heard them, and helped them; and so He will help you to try and please Him, if you ask Him to do so, and then I shall think that you are one of His children; and that will make your papa and me very happy.” “But, mamma, might I not grow naughty; like Eli’s wicked sons that you told us about; and never fear God any more?” “Yes, my dear, you might be just like them; but I hope God will enable your papa and me to restrain you when you do wrong:—Eli’s sons you know were never restrained; but God promises that if we ‘train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it.’ And if God blesses the means we use to bring up our children in the fear of God, He will put His Spirit into your hearts; and then He will never forsake you, for He never teaches

any one to call upon His name, and then leaves them ;—Oh, never !” “ Oh, mamma, how I wish that I was sure of being one of His children, for then I should not be so often naughty, and do what I ought not !” “ No, my dear, you certainly would not be so often naughty, but you would frequently forget God’s great goodness in taking you into His family, and you would not remember to do as Daniel did, and give God thanks ; and perhaps you would begin to listen to ‘ Inbred sin,’ as the little pilgrims did, and grow proud, and forget that he was your worst enemy, and the most difficult to get rid of.” “ Yes, mamma, I dare say I should, for that wicked Inbred sin never let Humble-mind and the other children alone, but kept teasing them and putting wicked thoughts into their heads for ever.” “ And this is what he would do to my little girls, and what he does more or less every day to us all.” “ When will you go on with that story, mamma, for we all like it so much ; and I want to hear about the old man again, who was covered with rags, and sat upon the mire and dirt, and was dressed up, and painted and patched, and thought himself so fine, till some one gave him a push, and then he fell over and over into a deep pit.” “ Yes, my love, I will read it to you this afternoon, if you are a

good child. I am very fond of 'The Infant's Progress,' for I think it is one of the very best books that ever were written; and that story of the old man of sin, sitting on the dirt heap, should be read and remembered by every one;—it teaches us a great deal that it is good for us to know; and the person who wrote that book deserves the sincere thanks of every mother.

The time for reading and conversation was past, and Mary withdrew from the little party, very much gratified.

In the course of the day, Mary looked over the children's library, and saw scarcely any of the numerous story-books that she had usually remarked in the possession of other young people. Mrs. Gray told her that she was desirous of being very cautious in selecting their books; she considered that the general class of story-books, whether written with a religious view or not, only tended to make little novelists; she wished to give her children a taste for solid reading, and with the exception of an occasional work, which she admitted with caution, she never allowed of their seeing any book that might lead them to undervalue the interest of scripture, by requiring more highly wrought description; and upon other subjects avoided all that would diminish their enjoyment in solid

and useful knowledge. Mary mentioned a work she had seen on the drawing-room table, from the pen of a late authoress. Mrs. Gray said that her husband had heard the book commended, in consequence of which she had sent for it for his perusal, and it appeared to have gratified, and she thought benefited his mind. "It is customary," she added, "to cry down works of that description as altogether useless and bad; but I think this an injustice to those who have devoted their time to the task; besides, it should be remembered that such works are not written for the religious world, but for those who probably would admit religion in no other form. I think it quite a waste of time for enlightened Christians to leave their spiritual food, and enervate their minds with the sweetened refreshments prepared for the world; they might nearly as well go to Shakespeare, whose natural light was profoundly clear, for knowledge of the human heart, as to those kind of books for spiritual aid. I am, however, confidently assured, that the works you have mentioned have already been made instrumental in exciting an alarm and an interest in the hearts of some individuals; and I am acquainted with one person whose mind was seriously impressed by the perusal of these volumes.

I wish the author had been made acquainted with the circumstance, for I am persuaded that she wrote with a most sincere desire to do good ; however, she is now safe from all anxiety or fear of disappointment ; and meantime if God pleases that her endeavours should receive his blessing, the books that have already found their way to the drawing-rooms of the gay and the unthinking, will in his time reach their hearts, and, having prepared the way, they will be laid aside for the precious volume of inspiration itself.

Mrs. Gray made something like an allusion to the sentiments of her husband, touching the education of his children ; and Mary, in as delicate a manner as possible, inquired if he objected to her plans of religious instruction. Mrs. Gray assured her, that so far from objecting, he allowed her full powers to act as she liked, “ Mr. Gray, my dear Mary, is an excellent father, and a most indulgent husband ; it has not pleased God to make eternal things of that importance in his sight, which I trust will one day be the case ; but he has never shown any opposition to my wishes respecting the children, and I hope I may have grace bestowed to enable me to inspire them with feelings of respect and reverence for their father. Nothing

appears to me more monstrous, more glaringly sinful, than wilful contempt or disregard of parental authority. I can make no allowances for such conduct. I cannot understand, even supposing a case where direct opposition is shown, how a mother can justify herself in allowing an opportunity to escape her of impressing her offspring with feelings of respect, and love, and gratitude."

"I have been often struck," said Mary, "with the strangely unnatural conduct, as I should call it, of some children to their parents; it seems to me that religion should draw the bands of affection tighter, not loosen them; and yet how often do we see instances of coldness and indifference to their opinions, on points with which piety has nothing to do."

"What you say is quite true; there must be divided sentiments where some are enlightened and others are not, and there must be a difference on all subjects connected with religion; but I am frequently shocked to see well-meaning young men and women (the latter especially) wilfully, for I can think it nothing else, opposing their parents in points wherein conscience can have no claim. The first and grand command is, 'thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The only one to which a promise is

annexed, relative to our duty to man, is, 'HONOUR thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.' Now it does not say, honour the righteous, the pious, the excellent, the wise : but honour thy father and thy mother ; honour them because they are your parents ;—because God has commanded you to give them honor, and because He has set them over you as heads to be respected and obeyed. I do not say that there are not cases in which it is very difficult to render obedience. It may happen that a misled parent may require his child to make sacrifices which it is impossible he should make ; in such a situation, the Word of God must be his guide. No one, for instance, would feel it to be his duty to give up studying the Scriptures, prayer, or meditation ; a Christian requires these helps, as man requires food for his body ; but there are a hundred unimportant points in which he ought to remember the precept, and act upon it."

"I am sure," said Mary, "that there is much more self-denial called for in yielding to others than in maintaining our own ground."

"Certainly there is. I have seen young persons resisting a parents' authority under the plea of securing more power to devote them-

selves to religion; but I should very much question the sincerity of such feelings as led them to throw off the parental yoke. I cannot help thinking that most young converts exhibit a vast deal more of self-will (or selfishness, I might call it,) than they are aware of. By way of justification for corresponding with acquaintance to whom their parents object, they sometimes urge that their mother or father not seeing religion in the light they do, cannot be supposed capable of judging, and therefore their wishes are not to be regarded. Now I must say I scarcely know a case in which I could defend such measures: where young persons do know the truth and have spiritual discernment, they certainly should be able to do without gratifications purchased at the expense of the feelings of their parents, and in direct violation of the commandment. There will arise difficulties, and there must arise suffering, but I am far from thinking that they lessen the evil by choosing the more agreeable way."

"I should hardly think their way more agreeable; I never find that self-indulgence procures the comfort one seeks."

"It cannot, Mary! there is in it something that an honest mind revolts from; and before all the schemes of self-gratification can be accom-

plished, many secret transactions and underhand plans must be resorted to ; all this is not open plain conduct, it is not simple trust in God, it savours far too much of the crooked policy of the world. A Christian should do all *in faith*, or he cannot be acting uprightly. I cannot understand making ourselves smooth paths by striking down all difficulties, whether lawful or unlawful. They forget that their heavenly Father promises to make the rough places plain, and to lead the wayfaring man, though a fool, safely on ; and that their course should therefore be to look to Him for guidance under every trial, patiently waiting to see how He will deliver them, while they are rendering honour unto whom honour is due. By such conduct they would evince their confidence in God, and their sense of duty to their earthly parents. I see no exercise of faith in any other way, and I trust God would have enabled me to teach my children to respect and love their Father, and to act towards him with openness and simplicity, even had he not possessed the measure of intellect he does ; and had he been less friendly to the cause of religion than he is.

CHAPTER XXIV.

‘BUT NOW HE IS DEAD, WHEREFORE SHOULD I FAST?’

2 Sam. xii. 23.

‘THOU ART MY REFUGE, AND MY PORTION IN THE LAND
OF THE LIVING.’—Psalm cxlii. 5.

THE afternoon previous to Mary's departure from the Grange, she wished to speak to Mrs. Gray on business; and not finding her in any of the rooms, she put on her bonnet and went out in search of her. She found her where she had expected, on a favourite rustic seat, placed beneath some beech trees, and sheltered from the north and east winds by a thick shrubbery; she was apparently contemplating the prospect before her, which was one of uncommon beauty, wildness, and variety. The lawn was of short closely mown grass, and sloped down from the spot on which they sat to a sunk fence, on the other side of which was a deeply planted bank of firs, which time had rendered almost

venerable. From this bank, the ground continued to fall for a considerable distance, and then stretching into a level, was met by a small lake, the opposite side of which was shaded by rows of fine elms:—ascending again, the eye was led on by an ascent of wild and varied richness, smooth and bright patches of verdant green were succeeded by the deep purple of the heath and the rich blossom of the furze; detached groups of tall and slender pines with a light and feathery head of dark foliage rose from this acclivity, and the hill still ascended, varying in its outline, and presenting every novelty of feature, until it was terminated by a thick wood, and followed by another and another range of hills. To the right of the lake, amidst a mass of trees, and almost obscured by the deep shade into which it was thrown, stood the remains of an ancient castle, looking darkly forth upon the fair prospect which lay at its feet. The sun was now moving towards its rest, and retiring in all that splendour of colouring, which so often accompanies its decline at that season of the year; its brilliant light was thrown upon the rich purple of the heath, contrasting it with the tints of the furze, and the red brown of the fern, and other of nature's wild productions. Gleams of vivid light fell upon the smooth

grass, glanced on the slender shafts of the tall pines, rested on their summits, and faintly glowed upon the water ; the dark wood on the right became deepened in shade, awakening a feeling of grandeur and gloom. The deer were still in motion, starting from behind the trees, and becoming visible from the contrast of their colour. Short stunted thorn-bushes grew upon the nearer ground, and their roots afforded a place of repose for the quiet sheep. The light moved on across the valley to the left, and resting on the trunks of the nearer larch and Scotch firs, faintly died away.

Mary had sat watching its progress for some time, for she perceived that Mrs. Gray's countenance bore the traces of recent sorrow, and not wishing to seem to notice it, she remained silent until her friend addressed her :—

“ This is a favourite retreat of mine, Mary, especially about this time ; the sunsets are generally very lovely in fine weather ; owing to the nature of the ground and the variety of the outline. I have spent many a happy hour here ; and,” she added, sighing, “ sometimes a melancholy one ; but peace and happiness greatly preponderate. I was thinking, just before you came, what blessed promises there were treasured up for us in God's word, suited to every

situation and feeling in life. I happened to take up the newspaper, about an hour ago, and my eye caught some verses descriptive of a mother awakening from sleep, after the death of her infant. Perhaps none but a mother can tell the anguish that such a sensation gives. Mrs. Gray pointed to one of the verses.

“To feel (half conscious why)
A dull, heart-sinking weight;—
Till memory on her soul
Flashes the painful whole,—
That she is desolate!”

“Desolate indeed!” she added, “if we knew not that the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort had taken the infant spirit into His own keeping. Rutherford says, that ‘the child is not sent away, but only sent before, a star which, going out of sight, does not die and vanish, but shines in another hemisphere;’ and I have no doubt, that my dear infant is now shining in the Redeemer’s presence. I can, and I trust I do rejoice, that it is called away from evil to the enjoyment of heaven; but there are moments when the flesh is weak, and sees nothing but the departed object in all its endearments: yet the gracious Saviour Himself sympathizes in our infirmities, as He did with His disciples,—‘the spirit indeed

is willing, but the flesh is weak.' I find nothing will bring any help, but going at once with my helplessness and sorrows to Him, waiting upon Him in patient expectation. I can get relief in no other way, it is altogether vain to attempt reasoning on such a subject; the more one tries, the less one finds it possible; nature is too strong for us, but grace is all-sufficient, and our blessed Lord knows our feebleness, and instantly hears our cry, saying,—'it is *my* child, I will go down and help it.' Oh! my dear friend, they are blessed indeed, who, 'knowing their election of God,' can at all times look to him in confidence, exclaiming, 'Thou art my Father!' How gently does His fatherly correction fall upon the believing child's head;—how sweetly flow the words of consolation into his bosom! how strong the voice of pardon and reconciliation! how joyful the assurance, that every step is ordered in mercy! and that all things are working together for good. Oh, my dear Mary, would that it were possible for the mind to remain in one unvarying tone of gratitude and praise, and that we could in some way glorify a Saviour who has thus ransomed us from the power of the grave! But this can never be on earth, and we must learn to bear with ourselves and our infirmities: a hard lesson this, but a needful one

to the rendering honour unto God ; if we could find one point of good in self to lay the finger on, we should instantly exalt it into an idol ; and as quickly undervalue the exceeding great and precious atonement, already offered up for us. How the worthless creature, man, loves to seek for something that will help him in making out a kind of righteousness to add to the Saviour's work ! I am often astonished to see how people burden their minds, and distress themselves in this attempt ; they do not consider, that in looking to self, they shamefully dishonour Christ ; palming upon the scriptures doctrines of their own, which neither the prophets or the apostles ever taught. Oh, how blind we are ! and how we rob ourselves of happiness, when it lies at our very door. I have no doubt, that thousands of believers who are now groaning under a feeling of unremitted sin, and find themselves utterly unable to conquer it, would be different characters if they studied their Bibles more than they do ; but they read a few chapters, and sigh over their deadness, and grieve over their unprofitableness, and then look for some directions from the precepts and advice of men ! while if they would but search the word of life diligently, remembering what our Lord said,—‘ Search the scriptures, for *they testify of me,*’—how soon

would they reap the benefit. But they read them to see what they testify of self, not what they testify of Jesus ; and keeping their joyless eyes fixed on self and its deformity, they have no thought of raising them to Christ the divine Physician ! All the multitudes that followed *Him* were healed ; but they seem to love to cherish their diseases, and Satan finding this, holds them in legal subjection, and lends them all his aid to keep them so ; and thus, poor tempted Christians pass their life, some in sorrow and bitterness, some in a state of depression, not unfrequently terminating in spiritual deadness. And yet there is life abundantly given in the Saviour, and offers of abiding peace ;—consolations unnumbered ;—and not one threatening of condemnation ; but on the contrary, sure and positive assurances of eternal life to all who believe, with remission of sins, and justifying righteousness. I cannot understand it ! I cannot see how believers should wilfully remain under the yoke of bondage, when they are so constantly told that want of faith is the sin of the deepest die. And yet it is as impossible to convince a person, who does not deeply study his Bible, searching for the Saviour,—that his sins are all blotted out, and that his name is in the book of life, as if there were no such

confirmation in the Holy Spirit's own inditing; they think the evil that St. Paul laments as ever present, making him do that which he hated, and neglect that which his spirit loved, is worse than any other crime; they seem determined to leave him behind as no example, and to renew their efforts, to dive deeper, and find something in self that will do *better* than simple faith. St. Paul and St. John were content to bear the trial of an evil nature, and to seek for justification by faith, saying, 'whosoever is justified by works, he is fallen from grace:'—fallen, most truly! for grace sets the captive free; but these prisoners read their Master's command to come forth, and refuse to hear Him; they want to stay in their cells till they can make fine clothes to cover their poor ones: although a new garment is provided for them by their Lord, their pride forbids their accepting it, and there they wait, toiling in the dark, making and altering, until death pays his visit, clothes them with immortality, and compels them to see the truth. Then the gracious Saviour, 'having loved His own which were in the world, loveth them unto the end, receives them into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world;' all their slowness of heart to believe

what the prophets and apostles had spoken of Him is forgotten, all their unbelief forgiven ; their hard thoughts of Him not charged against them ; but they are welcomed, because one with Him and with the Father, and members of His mystical body. What a blessed people are we ! What happy rejoicing beings should believers be ! How unvarying should be their song of praise !”

CHAPTER XXV.

ELIJAH SAID 'I HAVE BEEN VERY JEALOUS FOR THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS: BECAUSE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL HAVE FORSAKEN THY COVENANT, THROWN DOWN THINE ALTARS,AND I, EVEN I ONLY, AM LEFT.'—1 Kings xix. 14.

'BUT WHAT SAITH THE ANSWER OF GOD UNTO HIM? I HAVE RESERVED TO MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN, WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.'—Rom. xi. 4.

MR. HARDING'S house, being on the road homewards, it had been settled that the travellers should return thither in their way back; they found their friends much as they had left them; the Percys were just returned from a short visit they had been making, and they took an early opportunity of calling.

Mary was sorry to find Mrs. Percy complaining of the dulness and monotony of the place and people. She told her that they had accepted every invitation at the houses of the religious families, and tried to meet every advance

towards making an acquaintance, but they never seemed to get any further: the parties were so extremely heavy and uninteresting, from the cold manner of the people and their seldom introducing any religious conversation that might enlighten those who knew little on the subject, that they began to grow tired of joining them. "Indeed," said Mrs. Percy, "Colonel Percy says he sees no use in them, he is quite tired of the thing; if he could hear any thing new or interesting; if they would look like other people, and talk without seeming afraid of opening their lips for fear of giving offence, he would attend them with pleasure; but really no one has an idea how formal, and cold, and silent they are, and one never learns any thing from them except a little patience: there they sit and sigh, and look like so many condemned criminals. I should have thought that religious people would be cheerful and happy; and I cannot help thinking now, that some of our good neighbours must be so, if they would but be natural, and show their real sentiments; but they seem to think it a sin to laugh, and a folly to look lively. Oh, I am afraid we are considered sad worldly people; for Percy thinks it right to keep up his old friends, and not being much tempted by the new, he sees more of the officers and the

country people than he would if he could get on at all with the others ; but they are so repulsive in their manners, and so terribly shy and formal, that he can make nothing of them."

Mary spoke to her friend on the danger of quitting those whose principles certainly were, on the whole, correct, to associate with others who probably possessed none. Mrs. Percy said they wished to do what was right, and Colonel Percy and she had been anxious to hear something of religion, and, she added, "to become religious characters ourselves; but we were looked upon as gay military people, I suppose, and not fit associates for them, and they never gave us any encouragement, but always seemed to consider us as outcasts, and to imply by their manner that we did not belong to them. In short, my dear Miss Conroy, we found we got no good by going to their parties ; all we ever heard was a discussion about societies and schools, and an occasional sentence on the duties of a Christian ; and as we seemed looked upon as heretics, and perhaps were not in a fit state to enter into their rules and sentiments, we just fell into our old ways again, and visited those who would look a little glad to see us, and did not require us to assume all that unnatural formality. I see, Miss Conroy, that

you do not approve of our plans, but I am quite certain you never could commend the ways of the religious people here : I see so much that is artificial among them, and so much that is disagreeable and unnecessary, that I must confess I feel glad to have come to the conclusion, not to consider it a point of conscience to join them."

Mary thought she might have fallen upon a better course; and if she could not associate comfortably with one party, to have refrained from mingling with the other. "Yes, my dear Miss Conroy, if I was really a religious person, I dare say I might do so, but I am not this; and to tell you the honest truth, I have been so accustomed to variety, that I cannot live without a little society; it does me good; and if I cannot see a few acquaintance among the good people, I must take what I can find among the others: besides, they are not so bad as people say; I have found two or three already, who will listen to any thing on religion. You may say, and perhaps with truth, that I, who do not act up to my knowledge, have no right to pretend to teach others; but what little I know, I like to impart, although I may not profit much myself. I was at a large dinner party at the Herberts

yesterday, and sat beside an old lady, with whom I talked for an hour on the subject as well as I was able. I do think she was much interested ; she said she would read her Bible, and seemed much affected when she spoke of her sins, and her forgetfulness of God. I do not pretend to say that I accepted the invitation with any other idea than that of amusing myself ; but I was glad that an opportunity occurred of trying to do good. I must say I do not see that it is necessary for us to give up all our acquaintance for the sake of being thought of by a set of people who judge almost entirely from exterior marks ; if I could see those persons act towards others with affectionate Christian kindness, I should consider them under the influence of something better than common principle ; but whilst they continue so repulsive and so ready to put the worst construction on the conduct of others, I cannot say I think I am required to sacrifice all my friends for their good opinion. I go to the houses of other people without fear of their remarks ; if I can do any good I am glad ; if not, I am not, I hope, sinning very grievously : I act upon the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Corinthians, ‘ If any of them that believe not, bid

you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake."

Mary asked if there might not be danger of putting a stumbling-block in another's way, even though her own mind might not be injured? "Why, as to that, my dear Miss Conroy, I don't pretend to be an example to any one; I hope no one is foolish enough to look up to me as a pattern; but I do think my ways must stumble others less than the repulsive, cold, and (I will say) illiberal habits of the religious people. I am quite tired of trying to please them. I see that I never shall be considered by them as any thing but a very worldly-minded wicked person, and it is of no use trying any more. I went one evening lately to the Rectory: Colonel Percy was absent from home, and I was accompanied by a Lieutenant's wife, of the Depot, whom they invited. Certainly my companion was by no means a fit person for a party of that kind. She had been the widow of a wealthy citizen, and had lately married a Lieutenant much younger than herself; as they had no rooms ready, I invited her to our house, and she was to go with me. If fat and good-nature could have procured any one a welcome, Mrs. Mogg would have met

with a warm reception; but when she came down from her room I was perfectly bewildered! —there was the pearl necklace, and gold chains, and feathers in her head, white lace gown, long white gloves, and white satin shoes, all to appear in at the Rectory among the plain-dressed religious ladies: however, nothing was to be done, so on we drove, and I introduced my good-natured vulgar friend, finery and all. Mrs. Mires had on a close cap without ribbons, and a brown gown high up round the throat; the other ladies were nearly as plain; fortunately I had on a muslin dress, with very little ornament. Mrs. Mogg looked at her finery, and then at the others, and whispered to me that she feared she ought not to have dressed. I tried to comfort her, but every now and then the white satin slipper peeping forth among the black stuff and leather shoes, amused me enough. Mrs. Mires eyed my companion from head to foot, and then turned away. I must say I should have felt more embarrassed, had I not made it a rule never to mind people's opinions, provided I felt I was not acting wrong; and as the unfortunate lady came under my care, I resolved to bear it all. Several other persons came in, in the course of the evening, and cast their eyes most inquiringly upon us. I am

afraid I lost all their remaining confidence, for there was more silence than usual. Mr. Mires made some attempts at conversation, but the others not seconding him, the subjects dropped. Mrs. Mogg looked at me behind her fan, and seemed quite at a loss how to feel : at length Mr. Mires perceiving the awkwardness of our situation, proposed some sacred music, and called upon me ; it happened that poor Mrs. Mogg was a fine performer, and took great delight in Handel's compositions. I mentioned this to Mr. Mires, and my friend was soon seated at the organ, and I believe astonished every one by her skill. She was quite at home in this employment, and when we returned, expressed her satisfaction at being called upon to fill up the blank in conversation ; but her idea of the parties among the religious people, was certainly not very favourable."

Mrs. Percy was interrupted in her narration by visitors, and Mary took her leave.

On mentioning the Percys to Mrs. Harding, her friend seemed to hesitate in answering her inquiries. She said she had from the first been fearful of their stability, and was sorry to say her apprehensions had not diminished.

Mary asked if she did not think that, humanly speaking, more might have been done if they

had been kindly received, and treated with confidence in the religious circles of the place.

"Why, my dear Mary, it is difficult in such cases to know how to act; where you imagine there is not much solid profession, you must be cautious how you place confidence."

"I cannot help thinking," said Mary, "that religious people often become the means of producing the very effects they wish to avoid: they meet persons, who perhaps are really desirous to learn something of a better way, with such a guarded suspicious scrutiny, that they perceive themselves to be objects of distrust; and if they have not resolution or perseverance to stand out against these repulses, they become disgusted with their reception, and hopeless of overcoming the obstacles which lie in their way, and so draw back."

Mrs. Harding still thought caution very necessary: it taught you how to discern between the real seeker and the empty professor. Mary warmly expressed her opinions on the other side, maintaining that the weak and timid, though real seeker, might be sadly discouraged and thrown back; while the self-righteous professor would be welcomed.

Mrs. Harding asked "how could they safely act in any other way?"

"In the first place," said Mary, "we know that it is contrary to Scripture to think evil of any one coming in Christ's name; and, in the second, we have to trust God with our safety, I think, and to receive every one who seems willing to hear or to learn, as one of the 'little ones' believing in our Lord. I should feel my mind quite oppressed with the fear that I had put an occasion of stumbling in a weak brother's way, if I had acted towards any one as you have all acted towards the Percys. You must let me say all that I feel, and not be angry, my dear Mrs. Harding, while I assure you that I think that by acting upon these sentiments you do infinite harm to the cause of religion; you judge when we are commanded to hope all things, and you end by driving away from the kingdom of heaven those who would enter in. I don't mean to say that God will suffer any of His children to be excluded, for 'He will gather His elect from the four winds;' but I do think that using this sort of conduct towards them is using the means to shut them out. I must say that my conscience would be terribly uncomfortable about the Percys. The Colonel appears an upright man, of an inquiring mind; and Mrs. Percy seems very ingenuous, and very willing to learn, and probably would have been won to the side

of religion, had religion been presented to her in its own pure loveliness."

Mrs. Harding looked annoyed at Mary's remarks; but added in her usual gentle way, that she thought the natural mind must always feel a secret opposition to religion, and that one must expect those who were not seriously impressed, to find fault with the habits and manners of religious people. Mary thought that in the case of the Percys the natural enmity seemed to be subdued by an awakened interest in the subject; but had it been otherwise, she thought there was no occasion for giving unnecessary offence. She conceived that religion should be set forth to every one as the most lovely and happy and operative principle, inclining its followers by its life-giving and cheering influence, to meet all around with affection, interest, and brotherly charity. She thought we owed it to God to show forth a spirit of kindness; and to His covenant-love in our redemption, to let others see what a blessed happy people are they who are saved in the Lord.

"Yes, my dear Mary, I own the justice of all this. I think that, perhaps, we should consider more than we do the advantage of a spirit of brotherly-kindness; but I still hesitate to plead

guilty, as to our conduct towards the Percys. Unless we were guarded in our reception of strangers, we might have all sorts of characters among us, and thus injure our society greatly. I do not like to speak uncharitably of any one; but for the sake of proving that we did not judge the Percys rashly, I will mention one or two circumstances that would have staggered any one. Mrs. Percy was invited to the Rectory one evening, and was requested to bring a lady who was on a visit with her. Of course, to a quiet party like that, one would naturally go as plainly dressed as possible; but Mrs. Mires told me that there never was any thing like the dress of the lady she took with her. Poor Mrs. Mires, who has the plainest taste in the world, was quite scandalized with the fashion and expense of it. Now Mrs. Percy ought to have known that it was not the thing to take a person of that kind there. And another day when I happened to be going part of the way home with her, after one of our quiet evenings at the Rectory, we past the Assembly Rooms, where the Officers had a ball. She listened to the music for a few minutes; and then exclaimed, in a way that quite shocked me, " Oh, Mrs. Harding, is not that music delightful! what would I give to be there!" "

To the first circumstance alleged against Mrs. Percy, Mary mentioned the fact as she had had it from the lady's own lips ; concluding by condemning in strong terms the unchristian-like feelings that prompted others to form such a hasty and erroneous judgment.

Mrs. Harding was sorry she had been misled ; but regretted that the fact of the ball could not be contradicted.

"I cannot see this case at all as you do," said Mary. "I think the only difference between Mrs. Percy and a thousand other professors is, that she openly tells her feelings: no doubt many, if they were to let nature speak, would confess the same inclinations; especially after a dull evening, spent without enjoyment. When faith is not in lively exercise, nature will be busy. St. Paul saw this law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin; but he was strengthened to 'serve with the mind the law of God.' And so we ought to hope it will be with our friend, when Christ is more clearly revealed to her view; meanwhile I think you should have been pleased that she abstained from the gay party to join yours. I see no merit in giving up any thing that we do not value; but to sacrifice what we care for, for the sake of conscience,

is surely commendable. Had Mrs. Percy said that she was resolved on following the bent of her natural inclinations, and attending the balls, you might have justly censured her; but really I cannot think that her exclamation called for any thing but regret that she had not yet been taught to see a glory in the Saviour, which would make all other objects appear vain and unsatisfying. I think the sin is not in the temptation, but in the yielding to it. I should have thought it right to try and hold out every encouragement, and to point to the Saviour, who promises to make His people free. I never could imagine that I was justified in condemning another for the very same principle of evil against which we all have to struggle daily, and which in one shape or another will follow us to the grave."

Mrs. Harding did not seem displeased with Mary's observations, but she was not convinced by them; she merely added, that she trusted that if Mrs. Percy belonged to the family of God, she would return to them. A visitor being announced, Mrs. Harding just mentioned to Mary that the lady who was coming in was certainly a religious character, but under some trial of mind, occasioned perhaps, she thought, in part by want of watchfulness.

The lady appeared young, and contrary to

Mary's expectation ; her manner was rather lively than sad, but it was easily to be observed that she talked fast, and seemed to hurry over her sentences as those do who have some secret anxiety which they wish to forget or conceal. Mrs. Harding spoke of the last sermon, and expatiated on its usefulness ; her friend did not join in the commendation, but appeared to listen attentively. When Mrs. Harding mentioned some passages which had particularly struck her, on the practical effects of religion on the believer's heart, the visitor sighed heavily, but made no remark. Mrs. Harding took up a book on progressive sanctification, saying how much the sentiments of it coincided with those of Mr. Mires. She read some passages, commenting on their beauty, and pointing out how strongly the author enforced the performance of all the Christian duties, as the evidences of our hope, and the means of qualifying us for receiving the favour of God. "How sweetly," said she, "he shows the connexion between the Saviour and His people, when they are walking in conformity to His will, bringing forth the fruits of holiness, and dying to the flesh, and its sinful inclinations."

Mary saw that the lady kept her eyes bent on the ground, and that she made no remarks

herself, but continued her attention to all that Mrs. Harding said. "What a happy feeling," added the latter, "is it to know that our heavenly Father hears us, if we endeavour faithfully to keep His laws, and to do that which is pleasing in his sight." The lady made no reply, but Mary perceived by the tremulous motion of her lip, that she was feeling deeply. "How blessed are they who can lie low at the foot of the cross in penitence, pleading for pardon, and humbly hoping to be received; while they are conscious, unworthy as they are, of endeavouring to be found in the faithful discharge of all appointed duties!" Mrs. Harding looked at her friend as she said these words, and added, "don't you feel the assurance of that promise, 'Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.' The lady still was silent. "Don't you think we have a right to expect the fulfilment of all these gracious promises, provided we are living in accordance with the divine will?"

She kept her eyes still on the ground, and smiling with a bitter expression, answered, "I know so little of what it is to live in accordance with the divine will, that I cannot hope to realize any of those promises." Mrs. Harding said she hoped that her friend desired to do what

was right, and that she used the means. "It seems to me that no means do me any good, I only appear to wander further and further from what is right. I think I daily become less capable of making any exertion."

"Oh, don't say that; God is very merciful, and will in time bless our patient endeavours."

"Yes, but I can make none,—literally none! I don't know what has come over me, but I seem of late to have lost all hope of ever doing any thing acceptable to God."

"We do not, in point of fact, do any thing right, or as it should be done;—but still the Lord accepts according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not."

"I do not know what other persons may find, or how they learn to do according to what is right; but I find that I have nothing, and can do nothing."

"No, certainly, that is very true, and the case with us all; but we must not sit down in idleness and do nothing, because we can do little. You know we have every reason to expect the divine blessing, when we are found in the way of duty. I think we should make a point of attending all the means diligently, and being much with the experienced children of God."

"I find no comfort in the means; every thing I hear is condemnation to myself, and every word the rector says, is death to my soul! there is not a word of mercy for me! I feel, when I hear him, like a cast-off, wretched, fallen, apostate! I know that I am a believer, and I am persuaded, at most times, that God will never suffer me to perish; but sin is so powerful, that I am terrified at the lengths I may fall into. You don't know what it is! no one can know what it is to feel the dominion of sin as I do. I ask myself a thousand times a day—'But what is it? what is there within that robs me of every ray of peace? and the answer is,—'Legion!' for we are many!"

"Oh! my dear friend," said Mrs. Harding, looking shocked, "you must not talk in this way, it is right for us to see our sins, but we must not look at them to the exclusion of the Saviour; we should always see Him pardoning our wanderings, upon our sincere repentance."

"Repentance," said the Lady, "I would give the world to repent as I should; but what avails a repentance that is followed by another transgression?"

"Ah, but we should take care to avoid temptation, and not to sin against the Lord."

"It is not that I commit wilful and actual

crimes ; but the habit, the nature, the feeling of my mind, is sin and nothing but sin ; and your telling me to put it away is like the Egyptians with the oppressed Jews,—‘ Ye be idle!—ye be idle!’ when they had no straw to make their bricks. I *cannot* put it away! it follows me at every turn, making my thoughts a terror to me.”

“ You should associate more with the people of God, I think ; and embrace all opportunities of getting out of this unhappy state.”

“ The people of God do me no good, they only make me more wretched ; I see them all walking smoothly, in a quiet right way, apparently not disturbed by inward sin as I am ; and there am I, like a worthless cumberer of the ground, unable to feel or to do any thing that has even the shadow of an appearance of what is right. I sit and watch myself sometimes, and hear all that I am saying or thinking of other people, or of indifferent things. You do not know the misery of the feeling ! “ there,” I say to myself, in answer to some unkind or uncharitable reflection, “ how amiable that is ! how Christian-like ! how kind—how pleasing that must be to God ? Cannot you find some other failing in your neighbour to bring up and reproach him with ? have you any other hard thoughts of the gracious

God who has redeemed you, to cherish in your mind, and show your frightful ingratitude?" Oh! no one can tell what it is to be haunted with a view of his own naked heart, as I am."

"Did you ever read Baxter's *Saints Rest*?"

"Oh, at all events don't give me that, Mrs. Harding: it may do for the good people, or the saints, as he says; but I opened it the other day, and I thought that if he had called it the sinner's terror, he could not have given it a more appropriate name for my case.—No! I dare not read it; all the virtues and graces that he desires us to cultivate are entirely vanished from my mind; there is nothing in me (I don't say this in humility, for I am confident that I have not a spark) but evil;—hideous, frightful, heart-breaking evil—in every fibre of my constitution! I am literally afraid to take up a book, or to hear a religious person open their lips, for the inexpressible pang it gives me; nothing but condemnation meets me on every side! Oh mine is a weary, weary life! I am almost worn out with the trial of it."

As she said these words she seemed to have struggled against nature to the last, and bursting into tears, sobbed in agony. Mary was quite distressed to see her, and Mrs. Harding tried to soothe her, but all she said seemed to

have no effect. She became composed at length, and apologised for her weakness.

“ I am not given to shed tears. I can bear much without appearing to suffer, but my spirit is now almost worn down by continued anxiety :—yet I bless God I am not wholly left without hope ; for although all human means fail me, and I seem entirely cast off from human help, I can still find peace in the word of God. I dare not open a religious book of any kind, and my heart grows sick when I meet with any one whom I know will speak on religion. I cannot even bear to hear of the good that others are doing, for the miserable feeling that it leaves ; yet, with all these unhappy inconsistencies, I can read my Bible with peace, and often with great consolation. I cannot account for it ; yet I think I ought to rejoice. I think, perhaps the Lord intends to cut me off from all creature help, and to lead me straight to himself ; else why should I shrink from their society ? and why find that all books but the Bible heap condemnation on me ? I am even afraid to break the seal of a letter for fear of the effect its contents may have on my mind. I often read them half through, and throw them behind the fire ; every line condemns me ! I cannot act up to their standard ; there is nothing in me

to do it ! there is nothing but sin, and what am I to do with that ? I wish, if it were God's will, that I could bury myself in some secluded spot, out of the reach of man, and out of the sound of the law pealing in my ears, and see none, and hear nothing, but God's word, for in that there are no terrors. Yet perhaps God means me to bear with the trial still longer : if so, I desire that his will may be done. I may well desire this, for God knows, I have nothing to depend on but him ; all my former friends have become a dread, instead of a comfort to me ; and if I do not make God my only trust, where shall I turn ? for I have none other ! ”

Mrs. Harding said she thought it was very wrong to give way to such feelings ; her friend ought, she thought, to try and overcome them, especially if she felt conscious she was not indulging in any known sin.

“ I am not conscious that I am indulging in any known sin ; I would give my right hand to be able to get rid of the evil that besets me ; but I cannot. Yet I am not aware that I have in any way brought on these trials. I cannot remember ever to have sought the Lord with more diligence, or to have attended to the appointed means with more carefulness than I have done for some time past ; but it appears

to me that the more I try to do right, the less it appears possible."

Mrs. Harding said she thought that by prayer and perseverance, she would overcome; and that in the meantime she would advise her to examine herself most carefully to see if she could discover any cause for her want of peace; for she thought it generally followed, that comfort was withheld where some duty was neglected.

The lady made no reply, but sighed, and rose to take her leave. Mary wished much to speak to her, but felt a difficulty, as she must have said many things in opposition to Mrs. Harding's sentiments; and while she hesitated, the opportunity was lost. She sat thoughtfully considering her melancholy situation after she was gone. Mrs. Harding asked her what she thought of her friend's case, and if she should not fear that there must be some neglect to cause that disturbed state of mind. Mary said she did not think this a necessary inference; she felt extreme interest in her, and most deeply sympathized in her trials; but she felt certain that God was leading her, though by a dark and rugged path, to near communion with himself. She was persuaded that it was his gracious will to drive her from every earthly

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refuge, till she should take shelter in the Saviour as her only defence. Mrs. Harding had hinted a doubt whether her mind might not be rather shaken. Mary thought there was no reason to fear this; but that God was emptying her of self, and showing her the pollution of the heart in a way that few could bear. She thought it a singular case, but a most interesting one; and begged Mrs. Harding to mention her particularly in all her letters, that she might know how she appeared to be led; and especially desired to be informed whenever she seemed to enjoy the peace of a reconciled child, to whom the blood of atonement was shown to be all-sufficient.

Mrs. Harding asked Mary why she had not tried to say something consolatory to her friend. Mary said she felt very desirous to do so, but hesitated until it was too late;—"besides," she added, "I felt some difficulty, because I saw that you and I took different views of the subject."

"How do you mean, my dear Mary? did I say any thing that was not scriptural;—I hope not. I wished to say what was right as far as I could, without incurring the risk of healing up a wound slightly, which, it appears to me, the Lord may judge it best to keep open."

"We must all act according to our own views of truth; and you will perhaps think me presumptuous for differing from you; but indeed I cannot think that the way you took to comfort your friend was very encouraging."

Mrs. Harding asked Mary how she would have treated the subject.

"Oh! I don't venture to imagine that I should have said exactly what I ought, but I think that this sort of case requires extreme caution:—a mind, wrought up to that degree of nervous apprehension, could hardly be safely touched, but with the deepest sympathy. I believe that, after all, we ought to have known something of darkness and desertion in our own case, to be able to meet the spiritual trials of another with correspondent feelings. I should have been afraid that all you said would only tend to disturb still further her already excited and distressed mind. I am sure it is not wise to press the law upon the conscience of those whose minds are powerfully awakened to a perception of the emptiness and pollution of their own hearts: it is, as your friend said, the Egyptian reproach, 'Ye be idle! ye be idle,' when they can find no way of doing what is required. You do not feel it so, because your path has been a smooth one from the first; but

if God suffered you to look into your heart as He leads some of His children to do, you would feel the law to be a fearful schoolmaster."

"But, my dear Mary, I do not understand you; I never should think of telling any one to look to the law as the means of salvation;—that would be setting aside the Saviour altogether. I should endeavour to give comfort, by directing them to Him; but I should consider it necessary to urge the performance of the moral law, as far as in us lies, for the purpose of insuring us peace; for I am certain that none has a right to expect comfort who is not living in strict accordance with its precepts."

Mary said she thought Mrs. Harding's views unscriptural in some respects; and explained that it was cruel as well as useless to bring forward the law to a person emptied of all self-confidence, as her friend was. "It is driving the sinner to despair. Did not she say how could she 'bring a clean thing out of an unclean one?' and is it not the regular gospel plan to lay down, *first, the promise*, and next the precept. Why then should we reverse the order, by exacting the performance before the creature is enabled, by an union with the Saviour, to discharge that duty?"

"Why, my dear Mary, would you set aside

works altogether ; and hold up faith as the only title to eternal life ? ”

Mary smiled, and said, “ In one sense I certainly should ; for, using the words of scripture, I conclude, that ‘ man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.’ Nevertheless, God having chosen believers to eternal life, and called them, as it is said, unto sanctification, (although they are justified by faith alone,) they are taught and enabled to bring forth fruits worthy of the Lord’s own vineyard ; but these fruits cannot be expected until the union takes place, or rather until the believer is made sensible where his righteousness and strength are found. It is quite useless, and, we see from scripture, quite erroneous, to tell the sinner to bring forth holy fruits ; he answers, as your friend did, “ It is not in me to do it ! there is nothing but sin in me,—and what can I make of that ? ” But follow the Bible, and show him the promises,—tell him of Christ’s having provided for him life and righteousness without condition ;—let him see that his strength must be in the Saviour, and not in self ;—explain to him that he is accepted, infirmity and all ;—that Christ not only pardons and reconciles him to the Father, but justifies from all things, and presents him ‘ complete in Him,’ upholding

and leading him through all difficulties, and 'confirming him to the end ;'—set all this before him ; and see if the poor harassed sinner will not gladly receive all his salvation at the Lord's hands, and gratefully put forth his best energies to perform the duties that seemed impossible before. There is no motive like gratitude ! there is no principle half so strong as that which springs from a sense of unmerited love. Hence we see the prophets and apostles perpetually dwelling on the loving-kindness and tender mercy of a covenant God ; they knew what would excite to a holy vigilance, and therefore urged upon the memory the peculiar favour that had been shown to them by the electing love of God."

Mrs. Harding appeared to reflect on what Mary said ; but she concluded by thinking it hardly safe to put such strong views before a person who was evidently suffering under the absence of the Spirit of comfort. Mary saw it was beyond the power of her words to alter her opinions ; yet thought she was not indulging in presumptuous notions, in lifting up her heart in praise, that unto her it was '*given* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.'

Mrs. Harding seeing her countenance more than usually lighted up, asked what was the

subject of her contemplations. Mary paused for a moment, undecided how to act. She felt that her friend did not understand her, and probably would only condemn her opinions as unsafe or erroneous; yet it seemed right that as she had assuredly been taught of God, and brought by Him out of great bondage into the happy liberty of a child, she should not shun to declare what great things had been done for her soul.

"You do not answer me, Mary, said her friend."

"Perhaps you will not like to hear what I was thinking of just now?"

Mrs. Harding said she should.'

"I was trying to make out wherein you and I differ in opinions, and I came at length to the conclusion that,—but I am afraid to tell you, you will not like to hear it." Mrs. Harding assured her that she would, be the conclusion what it might. "Well then, I thought that God had led us by different ways, and that He had preserved you from much trial or temptation, and made your path a smooth and easy one; but that He appeared not to have bestowed on you very clear scriptural views of the doctrines of grace; and consequently you seemed to me to expect something from the creature; and to look with

less confidence to the Saviour, than you would if you saw more distinctly the total and utter emptiness of the heart of man. I thought that your views tended, unconsciously, to something of a self-righteous feeling, and that your happiness or sorrow rose and fell, in proportion to your satisfaction or dissatisfaction in self. It appeared to me that this habit of judging led very much to the exaltation of the creature, and must necessarily lessen the soul's dependence on Christ, and its feelings of gratitude towards Him. I also thought that such views must incline us rather to a narrow way of measuring the actions and characters of others, and to a want of generous confidence. I imagined that persons who spiritually saw more of the fulness and sufficiency of Christ in His glorious character, as Head of the church, looked upon others with less suspicion, and seemed to open their hearts as one of the same family, and not to condemn because there was this peculiarity and that want of attention to some unimportant point. I fancied that they dwelt more upon the love of God, and possessed from their principles a greater source of gratitude, which evinced itself in thanksgiving and happiness of spirit, and allowed of their looking upon their fellow pilgrims with cheerfulness and affectionate interest.

I thought I had observed that they had, if I may so say, a more natural love of the word of God; they seemed to study it as their Father's own gracious words to His own children; and not like some whose taste seems at times so artificial that they only wish to like it; while nature, oppressed by the weight of unremoved sin, seems to rebel. It appeared to me that they valued it more than any other reading; not as a duty, but as supplying them with the best comfort; it also struck me that they were a much happier people; and although I could not dream of concluding them more zealous or more conscientious, I could not help thinking them more favoured, and drawn into closer communion with their spiritual Head: Shaken out of self-dependence, and therefore better able to appreciate the overwhelming debt of gratitude due to God: Taught to look beyond self for happiness, and consequently sure of finding it at all times in Christ. In short, I finished my reflections by thinking, that blessed are they who 'know their election of God,' and who believing in Jesus, find Him precious to their souls,' 'and 'have no confidence in the flesh.'

Then you think my views unsound and unscriptural, Mary;—because I do not consider it

necessary to hold precisely the same opinions in some points, as you do?"

"I did not say that I thought your views unsound and unscriptural; (though I believe, if I am to say the whole truth, I think them in part so); but my opinions have nothing to do with it; you wished to hear my reflections, and I gave them; I gave them as opinions formed from observation; I drew the comparison between believers (as I designated them to myself) weak in faith, and strong in faith; and the result of my examination was what I have just expressed; if I have pained you, my dear Mrs. Harding, believe me, I never intended it; but my sentiments I cannot retract."

Mrs. Harding assured her that she respected her for her faithfulness;—adding, "provided you do not think me quite wrong, I am satisfied."

"Quite wrong!" said Mary, "my dear Mrs. Harding, I must be a fool, as well as what I am, a very great sinner, to entertain such a notion. No! the difference between those who see scripture as I have represented it, and those who see more darkly, is, according to my view, like that which subsists between the slave and the free servant. If the master be a good man, the one is equally secure of his favour with the

other ; but is there not a difference in the feelings of the two individuals? Free-will service of the heart is very different from imposed service : and look at the two beings and see which is the happier, the bond-man or the free !

Mrs. Harding seemed to consider the subject, but there the conversation ended. What further effect it may produce on her mind, time alone will prove ; and such of our readers as may be desirous of following the traveller another season, may possibly have their wish gratified on some future occasion.

THE END.

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